THE IRKUTSK CULTURAL PROJECT: IMAGES OF PEASANTS, WORKERS & NATIVES IN LATE IMPERIAL IRKUTSK PROVINCE, c.1870-1905

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Abstract

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This thesis explores depictions of established Russian-Siberian peasants, settlers from European Russia, non-agricultural workers, indigenous Buriats and Jews in Irkutsk province during the late imperial period. In particular, it focuses on characterisations of these groups that were created by the Irkutsk 'cultural class' (*kul'turnogo klassa*) in the late imperial period. The sources it uses are print media such as journals and newspapers produced in or associated with Irkutsk to create a 'microhistorical' study. It is structured around categories of analysis that were used at the time in scientific and literary treatments of lower class peoples, such as social mores, cultural activity, economic function, physiognomy and sexuality. It also studies how these images informed the development of a transformationist culture of government in rural, urban and colonial environments. Using theories of imperial networks and cultural projects borrowed from human and cultural geography and adapting them to an anthropocentric study of Russian colonialism, these debates are situated within the wider context of pan-European, inter-imperial frames of reference. The portrayals of population groups in both domestic and colonial settings that lay within these frameworks rested on common core signs and assumptions found across other pre-war European empires, which made both the frameworks and the images highly portable. This anthropocentric comparative is used to "bring the empire back in", both in recognising the imperial frames of reference within which its culture played out, and also as a means of furthering historiographical analyses that argue against Russian exceptionalism.

(98 209 words)

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Contents

This study uses the British Library Russian-English transliteration scheme.[1]

All translations of primary source material are my own, unless otherwise stated.

Russian character	Transliteration
А а	A
Б б	B
В в	V
Г г	G
Д д	D
Е е	E
Ё ё	E
Ж ж	Zh
З з	Z
И и	I *
Й й	I *
К к	K
Л л	L
М м	M
Н н	N
О о	O
П п	P
Р р	R
С с	S
Т т	T
У у	U
Ф ф	F
Х х	Kh
Ц ц	Ts
Ш ш	Sh
Щ щ	Shch
Ъ ъ	ignored
Ы ы	Ui **
Ь ь	'
Ѣ ѣ	E
Э э	E
Ю ю	Yu
Я я	Ya

* Final ий is transliterated as Y ** Final ый is transliterated as UY

[1] http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelplang/russian/cyrillictranslit/searchcyrillic.html#post1975 [accessed 13th June 2014].

Introduction: The Irkutsk cultural project

This study contributes to arguments against Russian exceptionalism in the pre-First World War era through an analysis of literary and ethnographic characterisations of low-status population groups in the East Siberian province of Irkutsk. The groups in question are established Russian-Siberian peasants, newly arrived peasant settlers, workers, indigenous Buriats and Jews. It is structured around categories of analysis employed by contemporary observers such as social mores, cultural activity, economics, physiognomy and sexuality. Images formed from these categories were also shaped by socio-cultural change in Irkutsk province and its evolving relationship with the tsarist state during the tumultuous late imperial period. This study conceives of these representations as part of the Irkutsk 'cultural project', an ongoing socio-cultural event connected with wider Russian and transnational ideological and cultural networks.[1] In particular, it argues that portrayals of these populations in both domestic and colonial settings rested on common core signs and assumptions found across other pre-war European empires.

The agricultural colonisation of Siberia gathered increasing momentum in the decades following the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. The state, learned societies and intelligentsia cast the net wide for answers to the unprecedented pace and scale of change. As the human, social and biological sciences evolved rapidly in the post-reform era, developing methodologies such as materialism, determinism and Darwinian biology all had their advocates. Ideologies created in relation to the industrial cities and far-flung overseas possessions of western

[1] Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.105-7.

European were adapted, blended with existing strains of Russian intellectualism and moulded by local conditions to create unique variations on shared imperial themes. As such, this study refutes the simplistic 'West' and 'the rest' reading of European imperial culture and instead portrays the Russian Empire, or at least Irkutsk province, as a unique but fully-integrated participant in a wider cultural network of states.[2] This study evaluates an Irkutsk cultural project which sat at the intersection of reciprocal domestic and transnational networks during the late imperial period.

Historiographical context

> The production of colonial knowledge occurred not only within the bounds of nation-states and in relationship to their colonised populations but also transnationally, across imperial centres. To what extent - and by what processes - did the knowledge of individual empires become a collective imperial knowledge, shared among powers? Was there a language of domination, crossing the distinct metropolitan politics and linguistic barriers of French, English, Spanish, German, and Dutch?[3]

This quote is from an introductory essay to a volume edited by Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler which they state "does not address the meaning of empire in regard to contiguous territory."[4] This seems a curious blind spot for a book centred on inclusion and interconnection. Ten years later, Professor Stoler made the following statement:

[2] As a particularly egregious example, see Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The Six Killer Apps of Western Power* (London, 2012).
[3] Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, (Berkeley, 1997), p.13.
[4] Ibid., p.23.

> Frames of imperial reference in the mid-19th century were mobile and migratory, moving across geographic and political space as well as institutional arrangements. This was true of Ottoman, Russian, Chinese, and U.S. empires as well as European ones... What scholars have sometimes taken to be aberrant empires - the American, Russian, or Chinese should give us pause. What are they aberrant to? I would hold they may indeed be quintessential ones, consummate producers of excepted populations, excepted spaces, and their own exception from international and domestic law.[5]

From the perspective of Russian history, the immediate response is "What changed?" Although more of an expansion of views than a Damascene conversion, this is a rare instance of the inclusion of the Russian Empire in such formulations by a non-Russianist. Indeed, it is often either segregated or omitted entirely. For example, in his otherwise superb book *Geographies of Empire, European Empires and Colonies c. 1880-1960*, Robin A. Butlin's stated aim was to "highlight and contrast the imperial and colonial experiences [of Britain and] powers such as Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy, and in some measure Russia," as well as "the late developers in the imperial field, notably Japan and the United States."[6] Having perched Russia between two stools, Butlin did not explain why it belonged to the former, presumably 'European' group only "in some measure". Moreover, he then contradicted himself with a cursory one page summary that in fact grouped Russia with the "late developers" without clarifying why this was the case for a state that had been conquering indisputably 'foreign' territory for centuries. This is not a recent problem, nor one confined to general or comparative works. In his 1987 work on Russian

[5] Ann Laura Stoler, "Considerations on Imperial Comparisons," in Ilia Gerasimov, Jan Kusber, and Alexander Semyonov (eds), *Russian History and Culture, Volume 1: Empire Speaks Out: Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire*, (Boston, 2009), pp.39, 43.

[6] R. A. Butlin, *Geographies of Empire: European Empires and Colonies c.1880-1960*, Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography (Cambridge, 2009), p.2.

imperialism, Dietrich Geyer noted that there was "a great deal of confusion in specialised western studies when it comes to adequately describing the Russian variant of imperialism."[7] However, Geyer himself fell into this trap by not questioning the supposed uniformity of other European empires against which Russia was judged.[8] More recently, Alexander Etkind's work also splits the "classical empires of the West" (Britain, France, and Germany) from the "empires of the East" (the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires) based on the occurrence on state-building "national revolutions" before and after the beginning of imperial expansion respectively.[9]

This seems a false dichotomy. How could it be that the Habsburg and Romanov empires were so very different to their Great Power counterparts? Did the relatively trifling imperial possessions of Germany, for example, mean that their situation was completely unrelated to that of their two eastern neighbours, both of whom ruled immensely diverse territories and populations? Willard Sunderland has noted that the common practice of omitting or segregating the Russian Empire from broader colonial and imperial comparatives "is to miss an essential part of the story."[10] Traits that are often cited as examples of Russia's incompatibility with other imperial narratives often have strong parallels in other empires.

There is an obvious comparative aspect to this project. Whilst comparative history has been criticised as distortive, it is "…at the most general level … not a special method", but "complicit in any method of deriving understanding

[7] Dietrich Geyer, *Russian Imperialism: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policy, 1860-1914*, East European and Soviet Studies (Leamington Spa, 1987), p.5.
[8] Ibid., p.6.
[9] Alexander Etkind, "Orientalism Reversed: Russian Literature in the Times of Empires," *Modern Intellectual History* 4 [Online], No. 03 (2007), p.622, [viewed 04/10/2010] Available from: doi:10.1017/S1479244307001448..
[10] Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca, 2006), p.225.

through explanation."[11] To take the above example of national formations, fluctuating ideas of identity were contested even in supposedly stable 'Western' polities. Destabilised by the events of 1789, the map of Europe was repeatedly redrawn by war and nationalist unification projects in the nineteenth century. Although nationalist sentiment stirred in the Russian Empire, its political institutions remained relatively stable.[12] Alexander II's Emancipation Reform was promulgated on 19th February 1861 (3rd March in the Gregorian calendar) two weeks before the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy. The French Third Republic placed a Gallic *mission civilisatrice* at the forefront of a sustained effort to foster a new French identity which could unite disparate social groups and help to overcome the deep divisions wrought by nearly a century of revolutionary upheaval, war and humiliation by Prussia in 1870-1.[13] For his part, Bismarck freely admitted to using "social imperialism" to quell domestic unrest caused partially by the tumultuous, militarised reordering of the Germanic states which led to the creation of the Reich in 1871.[14] Even in Britain, the growth of empire and state were tied together from the mid-eighteenth century.[15] Moreover, issues such as Ireland, free trade and

[11] JYD Peel, "History, Culture, and Comparative Method: A West African Puzzle", in Ladislav Holy (ed.) *Comparative Anthropology*, (New Jersey, 1987), p.89, quoted in Jonathan Hart, *Comparing Empires: European Colonialism from Portuguese Expansion to the Spanish-American War* (New York, 2003), p.7.For an in-depth debate on the virtues of the comparative method, see Rita Felski and Susan Stanford Friedman, *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses* (Baltimore, 2013). Also Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, N.J., 2010), especially "Empires across Continents: The United States and Russia"; and Gerasimov, Kusber and Semyonov (eds), *Empire Speaks Out*.

[12] The most notable flashpoint of the pre-reform period was the Decembrist revolt of 1825, a rebellion by a few army officers controlling no more than 3 000 troops in the capital which lasted less than a day. Many of the perpetrators were exiled to Irkutsk province. See Marc Raeff, *The Decembrist Movement*, Russian Civilization Series (Englewood Cliffs, N.J, 1966); Ludmilla A. Trigos, *The Decembrist Myth in Russian Culture* (New York, 2009).

[13] Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur (eds), *Promoting the Colonial Idea: Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France*, (Basingstoke, 2002); Alice L. Conklin, *France and Its Empire Since 1870* (Oxford, 2014).

[14] Hans Ulrich Wehler, trans. Kim Traynor, *The German Empire 1871-1918* (Leamington Spa, 1985).

[15] Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge, 2006), p.1. For example, the Act of Union (1801) was passed three decades after Cook landed in Australia, twenty-five years after the loss of the Thirteen Colonies and five years before Britain established control of Cape Colony.

the Boer Wars helped undermine and redefine what it meant to be British during this time.

Furthermore, from an imperial standpoint, the British Empire had agrarian settler colonies in Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia, with the latter also sharing a measure of Siberia's penal history. Eugen Weber has gone so far as to state that "the famous hexagon [continental France] can itself be seen as a colonial empire shaped over the centuries: a complex of territories conquered, annexed, and integrated into a political and administrative whole, many of them with strongly developed national or regional personalities, some of them with traditions that were specifically un- or anti-French."[16] To this was added French Algeria, administered from Paris as part of the metropole but fraught with as many competing theories of assimilation and difference as any Russian possession. Also, the fledgling Kingdom of Italy was composed of arguably even more disparate and culturally heterodox territories than either France or the German Reich, whilst the Compromise (0*Ausgleich*) of 1867 saw the ethnically and linguistically diverse Habsburg Empire reformed into the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Russian Empire had common ground with them all and was a key component of the established Great Power order. However, to manipulate a bilateral comparison would defeat the cross-cultural aims of this study. Moreover, it would be inconsistent to argue for Russian diversity whilst comparing it to non-existent monolithic 'British' or 'French' culture. Where comparatives are drawn, they are made to specific colonies or cities.

Comparing the Russian Empire with a wider 'western' imperialism inevitably brings it into contact with Edward Said's *Orientalism*, and all of the attendant debate. Whilst it still holds value, the common criticism of Said being too determinist and monolithic is certainly true in the Russian case. The existence

[16] Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, 1976), p.485 quoted in Sanna Turoma and Maxim Waldstein (eds), "Introduction: Empire and Space: Russia and the Soviet Union in Focus," in *Empire De/Centered: New Spatial Histories of Russia and the Soviet Union*, Empires and the Making of the Modern World, 1650-2000 (Surrey, 2013), pp.8-9, [viewed 03/03/2014] Available from: http://site.ebrary.com/lib/uon/Doc?id=10740201.

of a strong Siberian regionalist contingent in Irkutsk and a fervently pro-Orient camp among the Russian intelligentsia somewhat punctures the rigid 'Orientalist' framework of a militant barrage of cultural denigration from 'west' to 'east'. Furthermore, the tsarist state's androgynous position hovering over the boundary of Europe and Asia does not lend itself well to Said's strict dichotomy.[17]

That is not to say that Russia's geopolitical situation did not differ from those of its great power counterparts in a number of aspects. The key differences were that most of Russia's colonial space in Central and East Asia was contiguous to the existing Russian state, and socio-economic factors such as poverty and illiteracy, which served to blur the boundaries between the coloniser and colonised to a greater extent than in the maritime empires. This meant that "for longer than was the case in Western or Central Europe, Russia's 'internal expansion' (the intensification of settlement and the reorganisation of society) and 'external expansion' (colonial conquest and immigration) proceeded together and were almost impossible to disentangle.[18] Whilst these conditions played a role in reducing the pre-eminence of Social Darwinist doctrines, they neither eradicated them nor fostered inclusive attitudes in their place.[19] Such uncertainty, along with the increasingly sedimentary nature of the empire, further heightened anxiety among those attempting to define both 'Russian' identity and 'Russia' itself.

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[17] The debate surrounding the Russian Empire and Orientalism is extensive. Key texts include Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini (eds), *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington, 1997); Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, and Alexander Martin (eds), *Orientalism and Empire in Russia* (Bloomington, 2006); Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: The Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*, Cambridge Studies in Russian Literature (Cambridge, 1995); Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient:The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford, 2011); David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (London, 2010).

[18] Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Colonization, Conquest, and Cultural Change 950-1350* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 2-3, cited in Sunderland, pp. 4-5.

[19] For a fuller discussion of this topic, see Alexander Vucinich, *Darwin in Russian Thought* (Berkeley, 1988), Cathy A. Frierson, *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late Nineteenth Century Russia* (Oxford, 1993); Daniel P. Todes, *Darwin Without Malthus: The Struggle for Existence in Russian Evolutionary Thought* (New York, 1989); Vera Tolz, *Russia: Inventing the Nation* (London, 2001); and Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient*.

Combined with an incredibly complex relationship with other European powers and rapid social change, Russian national identity took on a 'schizophrenic' quality following the Great Reforms of the 1860s.[20] The late imperial period saw a fierce intellectual battle over 'true' Russian identity between two factions; the anti-European, conservative 'neo-Slavophiles', and the pro-reform, pro-European 'Westernisers'.[21] Given that the empire was still overwhelmingly agrarian, many people from across the political spectrum sought the essence of Russianness in the supposedly uncorrupted peasant folk (*narod*). These factors further complicated elite Russian attempts to categorise both themselves and the inhabitants of the empire. In Siberia, far beyond the Russian heartland, the situation was made even more problematic by the growth of a Siberian-born, ethnically-Russian cultural class (*kul'turnogo klassa*) that was forced to confront their forebears' Decembrist ambivalence towards the region and its inhabitants, and by conflicting legislative measures from the centre.[22]

However, the aim of this study is not to judge how 'imperial' or otherwise Irkutsk province was. Given the breadth and refinement of Siberia's spatial historiography, it is not feasible to focus overly on that aspect, especially when this has proven so intractable.[23] Indeed, the editors of *Ab Imperio* have

[20] Madhavan K. Palat, "Introduction," in Madhavan K. Palat (ed.), *Social Identities in Revolutionary Russia* (Basingstoke, 2001), p.xiii.
[21] These labels originated during the reign of Nicholas I and became increasingly anachronistic with the rise of nationalism and socialism.
[22] "Sibirskaya Zhizn Kak Pochva Dlya Iskusstva," *Sibir'*, February 10, 1880, №6, p.1. See Chapter 1 for more on the composition of this group.
[23] On the 'new' cultural geography, see for example John A. Agnew and James S. Duncan (eds), *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations* (Boston, 1989); John A. Agnew and James S. Duncan (eds), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Human Geography* (Chichester, 2011); Jon Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces* (London, 2010); Nuala Christina Johnson, Richard Schein, and Jamie Winders (eds), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*, Blackwell Companions to Geography (Chichester, 2013); Donald Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford, 2000).

denounced the notion of trying to define a place as imperial or otherwise since "any society can be 'thought of' as an empire, just as features characteristic of nation states can be discerned within empire."[24] Discussions of the physical and cultural networks of Irkutsk province have been included in this study, but only to conceptualise the contemporary cultural environment and the effect these had on local intellectual life. Rather, the main focus is on an anthropocentric analysis of how the Irkutsk cultural class conceptualised the peoples within their province. Unlike for the traditionally designated 'Western' empires of Britain and France, sustained, unified analysis of the overlapping images of lower-class groups are underplayed in the Siberian historiographical context.[25] For European Russia, the work of David Moon and Cathy Frierson on elite "outsiders looking in" comes closest, but focuses only on the peasantry.

On the issue of 'imperial space' in Siberia, see particularly Mark Bassin, "The Russian Geographical Society, the 'Amur Epoch,' and the Great Siberian Expedition 1855-1863," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 73, №2 (June 1, 1983), pp.240-56, [viewed 12/06/2012] Available from: doi:10.1111/j.14678306.1983.tb01411.x; Mark Bassin, "Russia Between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geographical Space," *Slavic Review* 50, №1 (April 1, 1991), pp.1-17, [Viewed 12/06/2012] Available from: doi:10.2307/2500595; Mark Bassin, "Inventing Siberia: Visions of the Russian East in the Early Nineteenth Century," *The American Historical Review* 96, No.3 (June 1, 1991), pp.763-94, [viewed 12/06/2012]. Available from: doi:10.2307/2162430.; Mark Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1865*, Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography 29 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Mark Bassin, Christopher David Ely, and Melissa Kirschke Stockdale (eds), *Space, Place, and Power in Modern Russia: Essays in the New Spatial History* (DeKalb, 2010); Jane Burbank, Mark von Hagen and Anatolyi Remnev (eds), *Russian Empire Space, People, Power, 1700-1930*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington, 2007), [viewed 17/07/2012]. Available from: http://site.ebrary.com/lib/uon/Doc?id=10225107; Turoma and Waldstein, "Empire and Space"; Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis, *National Identity in Russian Culture: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 2006); Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient*; Alan Wood, *Russia's Frozen Frontier: A History of Siberia and the Russian Far East 1581-1991* (London, 2011).

[24] Ilya Gerasimov, Sergey Glebov, Aleksandr Kaplunovski, Marina Mogil'ner, and Aleksandr Semyonov, "In Search of a New Imperial History," *Ab Imperio* 1 (2005), 53, quoted in Turoma and Waldstein, "Empire and Space," p.3.

[25] See, for example Troy Boone, *Youth Of Darkest England Working-Class Children At The Heart Of Victorian Empire: Working-Class Children at the Heart of Victorian Empire* (Oxon, 2005); Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca, 1988); Patrick Brantlinger, *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians* (Ithaca, 2011); Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, 1997); Zine Magubane, *Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class, and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa* (Chicago, 2004); Grace Moore, *Dickens and Empire: Discourses of Class, Race and Colonialism in the Works of Charles Dickens* (Surrey, 2004); David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*, Post-Contemporary Interventions (Durham, 1993); Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen*, Especially Chapter 1, 'A Country of Savages', pp.3-22.

Yuri Slezkine, Galya Diment, Daniel Brower and others have studied Imperial Russian natives, but without reference to the ethnically-Russian, lower-class groups who increasingly lived around them. [26] One such attempt at an amalgamated analysis is Alexander Etkind's revival of the theory of the concomitant processes of internal and external colonisation.[27] Although not unproblematic, this terminology is used sparingly in this study to denote the similarity of the underlying elements of analyses of peasants, workers and native peoples.[28] Previous studies have tended to focus on whole regions, such as the Arctic north or the Russian Far East. Similarly, there has been much work done on many aspects of pre-revolutionary social upheaval in European Russian cities, but comparatively little has been done on the similar, albeit smaller scale, changes in Siberia at the same time.[29] This study is consciously localised in not seeking an over-arching narrative for the Russian Empire, but seeks to extend to Irkutsk province the view that "with respect to modes of socialisation and government, it seems that, in the nineteenth century especially, both underclasses at home and natives in the colonies were being subjected to the same kinds of surveillance, reform, and economic redefinition."[30]

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[26] Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby M. Schrader, and Willard Sunderland (eds), *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies 38 (Abingdon, 2007); Brower and Lazzerini, *Russia's Orient*; Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine (eds), *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture* (New York, 1993).

[27] Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge, 2011).

[28] Ibid.; Alexander Morrison, "Internal Colonization. Russia's Imperial Experience by Alexander Etkind (review)," *Ab Imperio* 2013, №3 (2013), pp.445-57, [viewed 10/04/2014]. Available from: doi:10.1017/S1479244307001448.

[29] See Daniel R. Brower, *The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity, 1850-1900* (Berkeley, 1990); Michael F Hamm (ed.), *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington, 1986); Joan Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture, and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914* (Berkeley, 1993); Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald Grigor Suny, *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class, and Identity* (Ithaca, 1994); Two notable exceptions are Barbara A. Anderson, "Migration to an Agricultural Frontier: Asiatic Russia," , in *Internal Migration During Modernization in Late Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Princeton, 2014); Balzhan Zhimbiev, *History of the Urbanisation of a Siberian City: Ulan-Ude* (Cambridge, 2000).

[30] Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, p.66; See also Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Boston, 1996), p.7.

Notions of 'darkness', 'backwardness' and childlike naivety pervaded these images in the Russian Empire. Positive ideas of the Russian peasant as an adaptable, redoubtable "coloniser par excellence" (*kolonist po priemushchestvii*) could not offset continued uneasiness in official circles about the morals, religiosity, lifestyle, and economic output of the Russian peasantry.[31] The reality was somewhat less inspiring than the supposedly exemplary standard desired to provide a living example to native peoples that inextricably linked Russian civilisation to a higher, more prosperous existence. The continued interest in the moral edification of the Russian coloniser (*russkii kolonizator*) for the benefit of native peoples shows a similar paternal interest in both.[32] This domestic "transformationist culture" overlapped with imagery found in the empire's imperial civilising mission towards its native peoples, as both displayed a potent mix of Christian universalism, Social Darwinism, and racial theory.[33] This was due, in large part, to the messianic strain running through Russian Orthodoxy. It seemed to permeate all fields and mixed with grandiloquent ideas of a historical mission in the east to become the "overarching theme" in late nineteenth century Russian historiography and ethnography, both of which focused just as much on the alterity of the *narod* as the tsar's more distant subjects.[34] It is in this sense that this study seeks to help "bring the empire back in"; not to judge imperial practice, but to recognise that the majority of the late imperial intelligentsia perceived the Russian Empire as an empire, with an imperial society, "not as a nation state in the making or as a collection of separate national histories but as an imperial state

[31] S. Maksimov, Na Vostoke; Poezdka na Amur (v 1860-1861 godalzh); drozhlyne zametki I vospominaniya (St Petersburg, 1864), pp. 306, 287, referenced in Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, 2001), p.x.
[32] Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, pp.191, 216.
[33] Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*; Harry W. Paul, *From Knowledge to Power: The Rise of the Science Empire in France, 1860-1939* (Cambridge, 2003); David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (New York, 2002); Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (New York, 2002); Magubane, *Bringing the Empire Home*.
[34] Geraci, *Window on the East*, p.220.

and an imperial society.[35] Whilst trying to determine whether or not a place is 'imperial' or otherwise purely on the basis of naming is not productive, it is useful for a study such as this that focuses on cultural perceptions rather than 'reality'. [36]

Imperial projects and networks

> Understanding the interconnection of local places, ecologies, and cultural practices in global networks of greater and lesser geographical scope has become the leitmotif of the age. This is the context in which debate over the recent past and present of human geography must be situated.[37]

The notion of an ideal form of imperialism epitomised by one state or shared amongst a select few 'Western' powers is untenable.[38] Although an established Great Power in Europe (Alexander I's troops had marched into Paris in 1814)

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[35] "bring the empire back in" quoted from Mark von Hagen, 'Writing the History of Russia as Empire: The Perspective of Federalism', in Catherine Evtuhov, Boris Gasparov, Alexander Ospovat and Mark von Hagen (eds) *Kazan, Moscow, St Petersburg: Multiple Faces of the Russian Empire* (Moscow, 1997), p.394, quoted in Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia*, Studies on the History of Society and Culture 45 (Berkeley, 2002), p.15, [Viewed: 19/11/2012.] Available from: http://site.ebrary.com/lib/uon/Doc?id=10054452. This is a direct reference to the work of Vera Tolz, See Tolz, *Inventing the Nation*; Vera Tolz, "Russia: Empire or Nation-State-in-Making," in Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson (eds), *What Is a Nation? Europe 1789-1914*, (Oxford, 2006), pp.293-311.; See also Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis, 'All the Russias... '?', in Franklin and Widdis, *National Identity in Russian Culture*, 4. "Russia is not and has never been a 'nation state', where the geo-political boundaries and the ethno-cultural boundaries coincide. More or less from the start it has been a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual polity - an empire."

[36] D.C.B. Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (London, 2000), p.6. This same logic has been applied to the debate surrounding 'modernity' and 'backwardness' in the Russian Empire; see Yanni Kotsonis, "A Modern Paradox- Subject and Citizen in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Russia", in David L. Hoffman and Yanni Kotsonis (eds), *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge and Practice* (Basingstoke, 2000), p.3.

[37] Agnew and Duncan, *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Human Geography*, p.3.

[38] Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, *Empires and the Reach of the Global* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014), p.14.

the Russian Empire was not readily accepted as truly 'European'.[39] As such, it could be considered a useful comparative rebuttal to western Eurocentric imperial studies.[40] Following the lead of the 'new' imperial history, this study will argue within its limited, anthropocentric scope, that Irkutsk province was simply another refraction of European-style social and imperial thought, one of many "colonial projects" - such as settler colonies, protectorates, and treaty ports - competing for influence at the imperial court.[41] A 'project' does not claim the totality or thematic unity of a study of 'culture'. Rather it is "localized, politicized, and partial", drawing on a range of cultural, social and economic resources to produce constructed frames of reference for both metropole and periphery, colonisers and the colonised.[42] Therefore a project is not intended to convey the idea of a teleological plan, but rather fully recognises the role of longer-term developments, contingency and circumstance in human action.[43] Given the scale and diversity of the Russian Empire, this approach is useful in limiting generalisations.

The idea of different strands coming together to form an imperial possession also appears in Willard Sunderland's study of the colonisation of the Russian steppe. He states that the diversity of those who came to frontier regions was central to recreating it in the image desired by the colonising power. He also theorises about "two planes of experience", one related to the physical acts of occupation, displacement, and reorganisation and another to theory and culture. It is the combination of these parallel but competing processes that

[39] Alfred J. Rieber, "Persistent Factors in Russian Foreign Policy: An Interpretive Essay," in Hugh Ragsdale and V. N. Ponomarev (eds), *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy*, (Cambridge, 1993), pp.315-59. The debate continues even today. See, for example, Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011). Tom Casier and Katlijn Malfliet, *Is Russia a European Power? The Position of Russia in a New Europe* (Leuven, 1998).

[40] Adeeb Khalid, "Russian History and the Debate over Orientalism", in David-Fox, Holquist, and Martin, *Orientalism and Empire in Russia*, p.7.

[41] D. Lambert and E. Lester, "Introduction: Imperial Spaces", in D. Lambert and E. Lester (eds), *Colonial Lives. Imperial careering in the long nineteenth century* (Cambridge, 2006), p.9.

[42] Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, pp. 105-107.

[43] Isa Blumi, *Foundations of Modernity: Human Agency and the Imperial State*, Routledge Studies in Modern History 9 (New York, 2012), p.4.

shapes overall perceptions of an area.[44] This study primarily focuses on the cultural plane, which played a central role in the formulation and variation of domestic and imperial policy by aiding the creation of frameworks of understanding for would-be colonisers to interpret their surroundings.[45]

Conceptions of imperialism as a contested dialogue between colonisers and colonised which produced "uneven and complex" local outcomes resonates with Russian peasant historiography.[46] Variability among the Russian folk (*narod*) was historically attributed to a variety of outside factors such as migration and land reform; the implication being that without such external stimuli, the peasantry would be of one mind. Corinne Gaudin has attacked this "myth" of a uniform peasantry, and instead put the case for "micro-variability" right down to the village level as an antidote to sweeping generalisations.[47] As such, it should be stressed again that whilst this case study seeks to tie itself back to the broader Russian Empire, it does not aim to produce definitive extrapolations on the entire polity.

Related to this notion of imperial interconnections is the idea of imperial networks, which challenges the traditional conception of a one-way system of culture flowing out from the metropole to passive colonies.[48] Colonial and metropolitan sites were physically connected through economic, military, scientific, artistic, and demographic means. However, "communicative circuits of empire" such as trains, ships, and the telegraph also created a reciprocal cultural connection by facilitating the movement of newspapers, dispatches, government reports, letters, goods and personnel.[49] These circuits allowed

[44] Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, pp.2-3.
[45] Butlin, *Geographies of Empire*, p.2.
[46] David Moon, *The Russian Peasantry 1600-1930: The World the Peasants Made* (London, 1999); Frierson, *Peasant Icons*.
[47] Corinne Gaudin, *Ruling Peasants: Village and State in Late Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, 2007), pp.12-13.
[48] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed. (London, 2008), p.90.
[49] Alan Lester, "Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain", in Stephen Howe (ed.), *The New Imperial Histories Reader*, Routledge Readers in History (Abingdon, 2010), p.6. Also referred to as "webs of empire". See Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (Vancouver, 2014).

colonial sites with their own unique character to partake in a "coordinated metasystem of meaning and action" that spanned the empire.[50] Such technologies allowed earlier representations of indigenous peoples formed elsewhere to act as precedents, "guiding imageries of subsequently colonised peoples elsewhere."[51] They also allowed ideas fashioned in relation to the peasants and workers of the metropole to influence and be influenced by perceptions of colonial society. Since these worldwide networks helped to foster shared cultures across oceans, the same bilateral processes were certainly occurring simultaneously both within the Russian continental empire and also between European empires.[52] They shared European and imperial borders and, excluding the Ottoman Empire, were interconnected through ties of kinship and an internationally mobile ruling class. Moreover, this argument lends itself easily to an explanation of the differences between these colonial outposts, the theory of "cultural hybridity".[53] The multilateral exchange between colonial administrations, settlers, native peoples and the metropole created "grey zones" of intercultural contact which were "a porous mosaic rather than a straight borderline."[54] As such, each of these colonial sites produced its own unique cultural mosaic based on its imperial baggage and local conditions.[55] It is worth reiterating here the desire to avoid creating an overly rigid or totalising structure. Bearing in mind the multivalent nature of a 'project', these networks did not necessarily reflect an all-encompassing teleology, but a collision of fluctuating, ongoing processes.[56] Moreover, given

[50] Steven Feierman, "Africa in History: The End of Universal Narratives," in Gyan Prakash (ed.), *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, (Princeton, 1994), p.53, quoted in Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain* (London, 2001), p.6.
[51] Lester, *Imperial Networks*, p.140.
[52] Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, and Alexander Martin, "Introduction: Russia's Orient, Russia's West", in David-Fox, Holquist, and Martin, *Orientalism and Empire in Russia*, pp.3-4.
[53] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Oxen, 2012). 'Hybridity' is a vast and widely-debated topic. See for example Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge, 2013); Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity: Sage Publications* (London, 1996); Pablo Vila, *Ethnography at the Border* (Minneapolis, 2003).
[54] Etkind, "Orientalism Reversed," p.621.
[55] Blumi, *Foundations of Modernity*, p.4.
[56] Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London, 2005), pp.89-121. Althusser's warning against reification is useful but he too refers to the 'totality' that this project seeks to avoid.

the arguments put forward for the syncretic nature of Great Power metropolitan culture, it is prudent to note that the notion of 'hybrid' culture in the periphery does not imply belief in a 'pure' Russian culture being transported eastward in the first instance.[57] By comparing the various ways in which the range of sources collected in local newspapers and journals depicted the Russian and non-Russian lower classes, it will be possible to analyse "the range of images, their relatedness and points of difference and tension, and how this range is expressed across cultures of the time."[58]

Irkutsk province in the late imperial period

In characterising Irkutsk as a significant centre of imperial culture, it is necessary to look at how people, goods and information flowed into and out of the province. The physical networks of Irkutsk province were important in regulating this traffic and framing perceptions of the territory. Given the empire's historical lack of infrastructure, natural highways like rivers, "the real roads of Russia and Siberia", were important to its expansion from the originally landlocked Grand Duchy of Moscow.[59] Heading east, the initial exploration of Siberia proceeded over the span of decades rather than centuries due to the harnessing of the Ob, Lena, Angara, Yenisei, Ussuri and other rivers to move goods, troops and settlers. The importance of these rivers also provoked a desire to control them in their entirety, which itself was a spur to further expansion into territory that was at that point expressly non-Russian.[60] Irkutsk province abounded in navigable waterways. The scale of this is illustrated by a locally-produced 1913 booklet for settlers, which stated that

[57] Philipp Wolfgang Stockhammer, "Questioning Hybridity," in Philipp Wolfgang Stockhammer (ed.), *Conceptualizing Cultural Hybridization: A Transdisciplinary Approach*, (London, 2011), pp.1-4.
[58] Steve Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity in Late Victorian Culture: Civil and Military Worlds* (Basingstoke, 2003), p.12.
[59] William Oliver Greener, *Greater Russia: The Continental Empire of the Old World* (London, 1903), p.51.
[60] Lieven, *Empire*, p.205.

> First place in this regard is occupied by the vast reservoir of Lake Baikal. Rivers flowing through the province carry their load into the Yenisei and Lena. Into the Yenisei flow the Angara and Great Tungus and their tributaries. The major tributaries of the Angara are the Irkut, Kitoi, Belaya, Oka and Iei, Uda, Biriusa, Ushakovka, Kuda [and] Ilim. From the Lena flow the Kulenga, Tutura, Ilga, Orlenga, Kuta, Kirenga, Chai, Chi, Vitim, Neledui, Niuya and others. From all of these there are also many streams and rivers.[61]

The major provincial settlements sprang up along riverbanks. Although the journey to Siberia was predominantly portrayed as having taken place on foot, these waterways made a significant contribution to the region's development. The continued importance of sea travel, and its relative ease compared to the "dry route" (*sukhim putem*), can be seen in the continued attempts to utilise the northeast passage through the Arctic Ocean to the Russian East as "a window for direct communication with the civilised world... across the ocean." [62] After centuries of fatal failures, the Swedish ship S.S. Vega successfully traversed it first between 1878 and 1880. This generated much excitement in Irkutsk. Locals ruminated on the "countless benefits to the newly discovered passes, the possibility of selling local products, those with little or no value now, and the opportunity to receive cheap foreign goods in return."[63] Even though attempts to establish the viability of this route continued to be thwarted by harsh conditions and technological deficiencies, there was widespread belief in both St Petersburg and Irkutsk in its future prosperity.[64] There were also hopes that sea routes would be utilised to transport settlers to the Amur. It is unsurprising that in a time of growing imperialist posturing,

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[61] *Izdanie Irkutskogo Peresenelcheskogo Raiona, Opisanie Irkutskoi Guberny, Spravochnaiya Knizhka Dlya Khodokov i Pereselentsev* (Irkutsk, 1913), pp. 1-2.
[62] Z_n, "Okno E Dver v Evropu," *Sibir'*, October 15, 1878, №37, p.1.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Fridtjof Nansen, "O Morskom Puti v Sibir'," *Izvestia Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obschestvo*, 1914, p.129.

this would also become a matter of national pride. An 1878 article in *Sibir'* posited that

> If the honour of opening Russian oceans should belong to anyone, should it not be a Russian sailor, or a Russian professor?... Of course, the state of the Amur colonisation could not go unnoticed, and in 1877 the Governor General of Eastern Siberia raised the issue of transportation of settlers around the world by ship on the government's account. He has yet to receive a reply.[65]

Despite these failures, in the pre-rail era it remained quicker and cheaper to traverse vast distances by sea. For example, it cost the autocracy four times as much to supply Alaska by land as by sea before its sale to the United States in 1867.[66]

Irkutsk province was, by Russian standards, also reasonably well supplied with roads. In addition to the main Moscow highway (*trakt*) (known as the Siberian highway west of the Urals), pre-reform Irkutsk had three other significant dirt roads; the Yakutsk highway, the Zamorskii highway, and the Krugomorskii highway. In 1883, one observer in the Siberian regionalist publication *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* went so far as to argue that whilst

> the extreme remoteness of Irkutsk and Yenisei provinces from the central administration cannot of course be questioned... it is also impossible not to recognise that this remoteness does not come from their territorial isolation, for both of these provinces are connected with the metropolis by continuous and properly fitted overland roads, making their intercourse with the imperial throne very regular.[67]

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[65] A. Ch., "Amurskiie Pereselentsi," *Sibir'*, December 24, 1878, №49-50, p.2.
[66] Etkind, *Internal Colonization*, p.5.
[67] "Nerazreshenny Voprosi v Sfere Grazhdanskogo Upravleniya Sibiri," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, September 8, 1883, №36, p.3.

That is not to say that the journey was easy, or even safe. The duration and conditions were directly proportional to the amount of money and the quality of letters of recommendation at one's disposal. In this era, the overland trip from Moscow to Irkutsk took nineteen days at the very least, but varied greatly according to the season. The biting Siberian winter actually afforded the best conditions for travel. The spring thaw liquefied the highways, which dried in summer to create treacherously uneven surfaces. Moreover, outside of the cities and larger towns, settlements were still extremely isolated. As such, the government announced the creation of a network of unpaved roads in 1906, to reach what could still be described as "the impassable periphery". [68] Nevertheless, the combination of water and road routes represented an established if somewhat variable connection between Irkutsk and the wider world.

The most significant transport development came at the turn of the century with the state's commitment to building the Trans-Siberian railway in 1891. Forty-six thousand miles of track were laid between Moscow and Vladivostok, greatly increasing the connectivity of the empire. However, Siberia was to be served by a single line.[69] The railway reached Irkutsk in 1900, and Vladivostok (via Manchuria) in 1904. The circum-Baikal railway was completed in the same year. This link drastically augmented Irkutsk's connection to the metropole. In 1911, the American traveller Marcus Lorenzo Taft remarked that "To-day trains run daily between the Pacific and the Urals. Each week three express trains go each way between Vladivostok and the old and new Russian capitals, while a fourth runs between Irkutsk and Moscow."[70] The advent of the railway cut the journey time from St Petersburg to Irkutsk to as little as ten days.[71] Whilst the Trans-Siberian Railway was a potent symbolic link between East

[68] Mikhail Ivanov, "Novoe Pokushenie Na Narodniy Karman' (posledniy Etap "Kolonial'noy Politiki)," *Sibirskie Voprosui* 2, №6 (1906), p.58.
[69] Hamm, *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, p.1.
[70] Marcus Lorenzo Taft, *Strange Siberia along the Trans-Siberian Railway; a Journey from the Great Wall of China to the Skyscrapers of Manhattan* (New York, 1911), p. 65.
[71] S. Beldeninov, "Sibirskaya Molodezh v Peterburgskom Universitete," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №.1 (1907), p.59.

Siberia and the metropole, outside of Irkutsk city only Nizhneudinsk had a railway station in the tsarist era. The remaining larger towns made do with the aforementioned unpaved roads.[72] However, it would be inaccurate to think that the railroad made the journey straightforward. The line was built in a climate of haste, embezzlement and cost cutting, so much so that in its first year of operation there were an average of three wrecks per day with buckled tracks and subsiding banks common.[73] Moreover, many Siberians were not only appalled by the "bacchanalia which played out in the construction of the railroad" in terms of corruption, but failed to see its value, and aimed their ire firmly at the central government;

> As a result of such a railroad policy, the Russian people have poor railway lines, an unprofitable and loss-making state-owned railway network, multi billion [rouble] debt, which requires annual high-interest payments at the expense of the tax revenues, and with the promise of bad railways, new debt, and a new iteration of old stories with concessions and state contracts.[74]

Sources

Historical enquiry has long since expanded beyond the necessarily biased frames of reference constructed by colonisers, domestic bureaucrats and other "outsiders looking in".[75] However, the decision to focus this study on what could be termed 'elite' sources has been made for a several reasons. As a historical record, colonial projects are inherently exclusionary. Whatever the

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[72] *Izdanie Irkutskogo Peresenelcheskogo Rayona*, p.4.
[73] W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent: Siberia and the Russians*, Cornell Paperbacks (Ithaca, 2007), p.257.
[74] Ivanov, “Novoe Pokushenie Na Narodniy Karman’ (posledniy Etap "Kolonial’noy Politiki),” p.59.
[75] As seen in the work of the Subaltern Studies Group focusing on South Asia; see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton Studies in Culture/power/history (Princeton, 2000); Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Oxford, 2002).

influence of intercultural contact, more often than not what survives was written by successful, middle-aged white men.[76] Whilst Irkutsk's cultural class was not representative of the Russian upper classes, they reflected both the city's position and broader processes of social and political change in the late imperial period as the literary profession became accessible to the so-called *raznochintsy* (literally 'other ranks') such as merchants, businessmen and bureaucrats. In the Russian Empire, peasants, workers and natives faced many hurdles to making themselves heard, not least a dearth of educational opportunities and ingrained prejudice. Even when the Populists went 'to the people' in the 1870s or the Siberian Branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (SIRGS) dispatched anthropological missions, their investigations and findings were situated within frames of reference imposed by social, political and cultural elites. Analysing locally-produced portrayals of the wider Irkutsk population can therefore add to the historiography of how the Russian observers defined themselves and the empire.

The main source base for this study is literary and ethnographic material created and consumed by the Europeanised cultural class of Irkutsk province. The eponymous provincial capital was a developed centre of Russian influence in Siberia, hailed by its most ardent admirers as the "Paris of Siberia".[77] Given the social, political and intellectual constrictions placed upon Russian civil society, it has been suggested that culture and science were perhaps more important in Russia than in other Great Power societies. They provided a forum for debate with those outside one's immediate circle and a means of fashioning personal views of state and society.[78] Newspapers and the so-called 'thick' journals (*tolstiy zhurnali*) produced by cultural and scientific bodies like the Imperial Russian Geographical Society are the media used here. These journals are especially suited to the study of the Russian intelligentsia. From

[76] Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, p.159.
[77] See A. J. Haywood, "Irkutsk: The 'Paris of Siberia,'" in *Siberia: A Cultural History* (Oxford, 2010).
[78] Victor Borovsky "Russian Theatre in Russian Culture", in Robert Leach and Victor Borovsky (eds), *A History of Russian Theatre* (Cambridge, 1999), p.11.

esoteric beginnings in the eighteenth century, by the mid-nineteenth century the empire's roughly two dozen “active and serious journals” had “assumed a primary position as an instrument for the propagation of culture in Russia” with new publications appearing and disappearing on a regular basis.[79] Broad in scope, a single issue could cover everything from poetry and fine art to political economy. They “chronicled, criticised, and coordinated” new trends and ideologies from other journals and artistic media, and provided a wide range of content with a clear ideological stance.[80] The variety and intensity of intellectual debate across the genre serves to highlight its perceived importance. The opportunity they provided for lengthy explanations and the sophistication of their language ensured that these journals retained a strong market share among the elite following the advent of mass-produced newspapers in Russia. Improvements in printing technology led to a newspaper boom in late imperial Russian society that made production cheaper and faster than before. This technology quickly made its way to Irkutsk where it was well suited to capturing the mood of a rapidly developing socio-cultural hub.

These sources fell under the umbrella of what was known as 'Siberian' literature. As with much of the terminology related to the region, the boundaries of what constituted 'Siberian' literature were rather vague. The term has generally been taken to connote material written about Siberia as well as works produced there. An article in *Sibir'* from 1876 by an author known only as ‘Avesov’ provided an ever looser definition which encompassed both the native Russian-Siberians and also any outsider who wrote "for the awakening of consciousness in his [Siberian] countrymen, if the main idea behind it was to call the attention of the region’s residents to themselves and their interests which will awaken intellectual life in the region."[81] Only in the

[79] Robert L Becknap, 'Survey of Russian Journals, 1840-1880', in Deborah A. Martinsen (ed.), *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, Studies of the Harriman Institute (Cambridge, 1997), p.91.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Avesov, “Sibirskaya fraktsiya pisatelei,” *Sibir’*, February 1, 1876, №5, p.2.

narrowest sense used by the more intransigent regionalists has this term ever applied solely to people born in Siberia. This wider definition is useful to this study as it allows the inclusion of additional material by people passing through Siberia or coming to it from the metropole, both widening the source base and giving additional perspectives.

Chapter outlines

It is with cultural questions that this study begins. Chapter 1 provides an analysis of Irkutsk city as the locus of the provincial cultural project. It begins with a description of Irkutsk's cultural class as the main creators and consumers of culture in the municipality. This heterodox group lived in a diverse city which, for all its pretensions of culture and increasing wealth, could not fully shake the image as an uncouth, violent backwater from the minds of a growing number of visitors. In spite of this, the city's cultural output increased over the period; newspapers and journals were widely consumed as they chronicled the development of the city's theatres, learned societies and educational associations. These elements boosted both the inward and outward flow of Irkutsk's cultural networks and ensured rigorous debate on the issues facing Irkutsk province and Siberia as a whole.

The largest section of this study focuses on the ways in which characterisations of the provincial peasantry changed to reflect the shifting social, cultural and economic aspirations of the Irkutsk cultural class. It analyses competing conceptions of the two groups into which the Siberian peasantry was discursively divided. The first is the long-established 'Old Siberians' (*Sibiriakii*) or ‘veterans’ (*starozhily*) who were argued by many regionalist thinkers to form the basis of a unique ethnic Siberian genus. The second group, the 'New Siberians' or 'newcomers' (*novosely*) were the ever-increasing number of agricultural settlers who came to Siberia during the late nineteenth century following the easing of settlement restrictions. The traditional, romanticised

image of the *Sibiriak* as a pioneer agriculturalist was challenged by both ported European Russian conceptions of peasant reform and also a wide range of interpretative frameworks that were created in mutual discussion with European intellectuals, such as ethnography, anthropology, Darwinian social theory and material determinism. Debate raged as to which of these figures was the superior colonist, the more productive agriculturalist and the more 'Russian' *muzhik*.

Although the majority of Siberians remained in agricultural pursuits, peasants were not the only lower-class Russians in Irkutsk province. Chapter 3 analyses conceptions of the roughly 250 000 people in Irkutsk who were engaged as miners, railwaymen, labourers, servants, and so on. The unprecedented growth of industry and urbanisation left local observers searching for answers on how to deal with a range of attendant social issues. Despite the disparity in size and industrial development, they looked to the human sciences formulated in the industrial heartlands of Europe, which came to have much in common with scientific and literary treatments of colonised peoples and poor peasants. Class-based theories of difference, especially Marxism, provided a challenge to the enduring regionalist conception of the *Sibiriak* in the last decades of the empire, although this image proved remarkably durable.

Chapter 4 begins with an overview of the *inorodtsy* estate in Siberia and the natives of Irkutsk province in general. The Buriats, as by far the largest native group in the province, are the main focus. They were subject to a transformationist culture which sought to fundamentally reorder their lives using the same European models of civility that were thrust upon the peasantry and workers. As such, there follows a discussion on the complex interplay between notions of Russification and the imperial civilising mission. This chapter covers aspects of native life that were key targets for transformation - religious affiliations, morality, language, agriculture,

sexuality, morality and the treatment of women - to analyse the reaction of Russian-Siberian observers to changes in Buriat society.

The final chapter is a case study of a group that were legally *inorodtsy* but had little chance of being integrated with the main body of the Russian population; the Jews of Irkutsk province. Although Jewish settlement in Siberia was heavily restricted, criminal exile, lax controls and happenstance had combined to create a small but significant Jewish population. Their presence generated a disproportionate amount of debate in Irkutsk, and provides an interesting case study in the transferral of images and frames of reference from European and western Russian settings. Irkutsk Jews were evaluated using many of the same categories as the other groups mentioned in this study. However, there was a much greater emphasis on Jewish separateness, as they were subjected to anti-Semitic stereotypes which bore little or no resemblance to the reality of their lives. Ideas of innate racial inferiority and socio-economic unsuitability left no room for the Jews of Irkutsk province in traditional or evolving conceptions of the *Sibiriak*. This left them vulnerable when state authority temporarily receded in 1905, resulting in a fatal pogrom in Irkutsk.

1

The Irkutsk Cultural Class: Civil and cultural life in late imperial Irkutsk

> We found ourselves in the midst of a scene of civilisation such as we had not witnessed since setting foot on Russian soil... Sledges with beautiful well-groomed horses and glittering harness were galloping along the road, and ladies paced the sidewalks dressed in furs of designs which showed that Parisian fashions were not neglected by the mantle-makers of Irkutsk.[1]

This chapter focuses predominantly on Irkutsk city, 'Siberia's St Petersburg', as a cultural space in the late imperial period. Irkutsk had developed from its foundation an isolated *yasak* station in the early seventeenth century to be simultaneously one of the foremost political, social and cultural centres in the Russian Far East and a frontier gold-mining town.[2] The cultural output of Irkutsk province was overwhelmingly concentrated in the eponymous provincial capital. As such, Irkutsk played a key role in the political, economic and cultural definition of East Siberia. The learned societies and publications

[1] Lionel Francis Gowing, *Five Thousand Miles in a Sledge: A Mid-Winter Journey Across Siberia* (London, 1889), p.207, [viewed: 01/12/2010] Available from: http://archive.org/details/fivethousandmil00gowigoog.

[2] *Yasak* was the Russified term for the old Mongol-Turkic concept of exchange of goods. From the earliest days of the Siberian conquest, the Russians saw these "*yasak* people" (*yasachnie lyudi*) as tribute payers, but the relationship was often initially more reciprocal than they cared to admit.

that emerged there to form the city's "cultural class" (*kul'turnogo klassa*) forged links with other imperial and international locations and their output was disseminated into the provincial hinterland. They also strove to forge a strong, distinct *Irkutyan* identity and provide a platform for the expression of local views at a municipal and provincial level in response to the increasingly strong communication, economic and political links between Siberia and European Russia. This localism was a local variation of the burgeoning Siberian regionalist (*oblastnik*) movement, of which Irkutsk was an important centre, though it was certainly not limited to this group.

Culture plays a vital role alongside politics and economics in helping to define peoples, spheres of action and events.[3] From the 1840s, there emerged "a well-developed [though not uncontested] Russian ideology of empire preoccupied with matters of culture and enlightenment, which posed an important contrast to traditional Russian militarism and imperial conquest of the frontier."[4] In portraying Irkutsk as a significant component in this process, it is useful to contextualise it within the Russian Empire and the wider world. This begins with a portrait of the city's cultural class, a motley faction composed of merchants, officials, officers, travellers and also a few exiles, to provide some background on these men (for they were overwhelmingly male) and their relation to the wider Russian intelligentsia.[5] It then moves on to the debate surrounding the dual image of Irkutsk as both a cultured, Parisian 'Heaven' and a violent, frontier 'Hell' in the minds of Russian and especially foreign observers. From that comes a discussion of the shape and functionality of the cultural networks which flourished in the city in the late imperial period. In combination with the physical networks discussed in the previous chapter, they facilitated a range of local, imperial and international connections which combined to create the unique Irkutsk project. This includes the self-appointed

[3] Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge, 1994), p.2.
[4] Austin Jersild and Neil Melkadze, "The Dilemmas of Enlightenment in the Eastern Borderlands: The Theatre and Library in Tblisi", in Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, and Alexander Martin (eds), *Orientalism and Empire in Russia* (Bloomington, 2006), p.297.
[5] "Sibirskaya Zhizn Kak Pochva Dlya Iskusstva," *Sibir'*, February 10, 1880, №6, p.1.

leadership role of print media, as well as local hopes for the edifying power of theatre and the novelty of cinema. Following that is an analysis of the key connective role played by the city's learned societies and a discussion of the provision of education. The chapter finishes with a discussion of more worldly matters, namely the development of local political parties and the effects of censorship.

The cultural class of Irkutsk province

This study will focus on output of the Irkutsk cultural class *(kul'turnogo klassa)* as well as those writing about the province from elsewhere.[6] This term is roughly analogous to 'intelligentsia', which is itself of Russian origin. Geoffrey Hosking has stated that a definition of 'intelligentsia' cannot be pinned down to social status, economic function or education, but that its "connotation of ideological attitude" means that any definition has "historically speaking... varied considerably with the political outlook of the user."[7] Whilst references to the intelligentsia appear in this study, the locally-produced identifier 'cultural class' provides a less ideologically fraught alternative which can also be used to signify the atypical socio-economic profile of the cultural producers of Irkutsk without accusations of misuse.

Up until the middle of the nineteenth century, Russian authors were largely members of the gentry, with many - such as Pushkin, Turgenev, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky - belonging to the landowning, serf-owning estate. There was no system of free, universal education, and entrance to the empire's schools and

[6] Ibid.

[7] "The Birth of the Intelligentsia", in Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917* (Boston, Mass., 1997), p.263; See also Daniel R. Brower, "The Problem of the Russian Intelligentsia," *Slavic Review* 26, №4 (December 1967) pp.638-47, [viewed: 22/09/2012] Available at doi:10.2307/2492614; Charles Steinwedel, "Making Social Groups, One Person at a Time: The Identification of Individuals by Estate, Religious Confession, and Ethnicity in Late Imperial Russia," in Jane Caplan and John C. Torpey (eds), *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World*, (Princeton, 2001); Marc Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth-Century Nobility* (Harcourt, 1966); Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Social Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, 1997).

universities was restricted by both money and breeding. As such these writers represented the views of, and wrote for, a small, literate, moneyed minority at the pinnacle of Russian society. However, the changes wrought by succeeding bouts of social and economic reform from the 1850s onwards fomented the creeping erosion of the economic, social, and cultural predominance of the gentry.[8] Reforms also led to a gradual diffusion of education among a wider, though still limited, section of the populace. The combination of these factors opened the literary profession to the so-called *raznochintsy*. Probably originating in the eighteenth century, this was another typically nebulous term which literally translated as 'other ranks.' It has been defined by John P. Le Donne as an estate where "whoever could not fit into the established social categories found the minimal sense of a common identity."[9] These outliers were often the descendants of merchants, businessmen, freemen and lower-ranking bureaucrats. This diversification of the arts brought new ideas, experiences and points of view into the Russian literary sphere. Whilst emancipated peasants could also be *raznochintsy*, few were ever lauded for their literary achievements.[10]

The Irkutsk cultural class are symptomatic of the diffusion of literary production and social status to the *raznochintsy*. Siberian society had grown without serfdom or landowning gentry.[11] Much of the Siberian social elite was composed of wealthy merchants, local government officials, and even political exiles, whilst those considered to be from the upper echelons of St Petersburg and Moscow society were few and far between. If the great and the good of

[8] By the time of the Emancipation Proclamation in March 1861, the Russian gentry had already pledged two-thirds of their property to the Treasury in return for loans; Richard Hellie, "The Structure of Russian Imperial History", *History and Theory*, Vol. 44, №.4, Theme Issue 44: Theorizing Empire (Dec., 2005), p. 99.

[9] John P. Le Donne, *Absolutism and Ruling Class: The Formation of the Russian Political Order, 1700-1825* (Oxford, 1991), pp.14, 29; See also Wirtschafter, *Social Identity in Imperial Russia*, p.63.

[10] See Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature 1861-1917* (Princeton, 1985), and Ben Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools: Officialdom, village culture, and popular pedagogy, 1861-1914* (Berkeley, 1983).

[11] See Donald Treadgold, *The Great Siberian Migration; government and peasant resettlement, from Emancipation to the First World War* (Princeton, 1957).

the two capitals were represented, it was usually due to either exile or a punitive bureaucratic posting. Political exiles were seen in increasing numbers in the late Imperial period. The Populists appeared from the 1870s, followed by the Marxists from the 1890s. In some of East Siberia's smaller settlements, these politicals outnumbered native residents. The embattled tsarist state prohibited them from governmental work, business dealings, professional employment and public life, but traditional Siberian pragmatism often prevailed due to a shortage of educated people.[12] By the start of the twentieth century, the entire spectrum from racial-nationalist right to Bolshevik left had at least a measure of support across Siberian society. The influx of new people had brought to Irkutsk new ideas, new ways of seeing themselves and the empire. There was a mixture of locally-born and migrant participants, as well as the occasional non-Russian European.[13] In spite of the strength of regionalist feeling in Siberia, many felt it necessary to point out their own Great Russian origins. For example, an 1880 editorial in *Sibir'* affirmed that "Siberia's society of idle people... had largely ridden out of Russia."[14] Another important factor was the 'boomtown' atmosphere of Irkutsk, fuelled by the vast fortunes rapidly accrued by prospectors, merchants and other businessmen. With money came a general embourgeoisement of tastes and the stirrings of a high society similar to that of European Russia which, in turn, took its cue from 'fashionable' European cities such as London and Paris. Eating habits, entertainments, and lifestyles were aped to create a somewhat louche, provincial version of European high society.[15] Such developments are important for this study. Although the social elite may have been smaller and less diverse than elsewhere, the fact that these groups were forming, and that they built theatres, funded troupes of actors, subscribed to journals, wore

[12] W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent: Siberia and the Russians*, (Ithaca, 2007), pp.212-3.
[13] This situation was further confused by the tendency of native-Siberian writers to move to St Petersburg or Moscow at the earliest opportunity and rarely, if ever, return home.
[14] "Sibirskaya Zhizn Kak Pochva Dlya Iskusstva," p.1.
[15] Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent*, p.268.

Parisian fashions and swilled champagne at dinner parties is evidence of a strongly European sensibility in this 'Asiatic' region of the Russian Empire.

Russia was, like the other great (and lesser) powers, part of a wider cultural system which still had its centre of gravity firmly in central and western Europe.[16] The great novelists, poets and thinkers of western and central Europe were read across the Russian Empire, just as the works of Dostoevsky, Chekhov and Stravinsky were lauded in Paris and London. Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd have gone as far as to say that in spite of "striking differences" in numbers and social standing, there prevailed a strongly European "bourgeois sensibility" in Russian cities.[17] Although Benedict Anderson's work on "imagined communities" has received criticism in recent years, his theory of the centrality of "print capitalism" to the creation of fellow-feeling is well-fitted to this study.[18] The geographical remoteness of Irkutsk's literary class from the metropole, and the difficulty in travelling between the two for much of the period, made the production and distribution of the printed word their single most valued link to each other, the metropole and the wider world. The close-knit literary communities fostered by the journals, and their fervid debates on the nature of 'Russia' and 'Russians', show the importance these people attached both to national and class identities and to print media as a point of coalescence.[19]

The increasing diversity of the literary profession is also reflected in those sources created by individuals travelling through, or writing from, Siberia. All manner of outside 'specialists' and 'scientists' such as archaeologists,

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[16] See Paul Kennedy, The *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500-2000* (London, 1989); for a critique of Kennedy's definitions, see Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony: the world order since 1500* (Abingdon, 2008).

[17] Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd, "Introduction: Literature, History, Culture", in Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (eds), *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1881-1940* (Oxford, 1998), pp.4-5.

[18] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised edition (London, 2006).

[19] Robert L. Belknap, 'Survey of Russian Journals, 1840-1880' in Deborah A. Martinsen (ed.), *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, Studies of the Harriman Institute (Cambridge, 1997), p.91.

naturalists, orientalists, folklorists, missionaries, gentleman travellers, political exiles, journalists and philanthropists ventured into Siberia to discover and study the region for themselves. This phenomenon overlapped with elite Russian interest in the *narod* which stirred in the 1830s but grew exponentially following Emancipation. They too were studied by a similarly wide range of 'specialists', political agitators and keen amateurs.[20] The theoretical and practical work of the intelligentsia was increasingly channelled into an ever-growing number of learned societies across all fields, with their attendant publications. This abundance of 'expert' opinion was reflective of a wider international phenomenon, as a "veritable cult of objectivity" coursed through both science and the humanities in the nineteenth century. Empiricism firmly displaced philosophy to become the dominant intellectual method as many observers came to believe in the possibility of ascertaining 'truth' from careful study, diagnosis, and categorisation.[21] However, dissenting voices were ever-present. In Russia, they gained momentum in the 1870s and 80s as metaphysical thinkers like Solov'ev, Bulgakov, the neo-Slavophiles and neo-Kantians gained ground.[22]

Fascination with Siberia and its people was not restricted to those of Russian birth. The late imperial period saw an increasing number of foreign observers traverse the region. Many stopped in Irkutsk, drawn in by its reputation as the pre-eminent cultural centre in East Siberia. Whilst China, Japan, Arctic tribes or Mongol nomads may have been the ultimate aim of these travellers, Irkutsk regularly featured in their works. They usually sought out the aforementioned cultural class for conversation and accommodation, and as such their accounts provide another viewpoint of the province and its inhabitants.

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[20] Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca, 2006), p.162; Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, 2001), p.167.

[21] Louise McReynolds and Cathy Popkin, "The Objective Eye and the Common Good," in Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (eds), *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1880-1940* (Oxford, 1998), p.88.

[22] McReynolds and Popkin, "The Objective Eye", pp. 85-93.

It is worth pausing here to give a brief portrait of some of the more prominent members of the Irkutsk cultural class on whose work this study is based. Many of them espoused what came to be known as Siberian regionalism (*oblastnichestvo*). A broadly pro-European, westernising movement, it peaked between the 1860s and 1880s but began to ebb thereafter. Many of its advocates had been imprisoned or exiled for their allegedly seditious views. Indeed, the tsarist government was so wary of this movement that it banned the term 'Siberia' from official nomenclature for fear of encouraging separatism. The most prominent of these regionalists was the Omsk-born explorer, archaeologist and author Nikolai Mikhailovich Yadrintsev (1842-1894). His biggest contribution to the movement was the 1882 book *Siberia as a Colony* which set out a vision of Siberia's history as one of ongoing imperial exploitation by the Russian state and advocated autonomy as the only remedy.[23] In the context of this study, even more significant was his founding of the pro-regionalist newspaper *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* in 1883, which transferred publication to Irkutsk in 1888 where it functioned as a soapbox for Yadrintsev's brand of Siberian regionalism.

One of Yadrintsev's closest allies was his fellow St Petersburg University alumnus, the renowned ethnographer and writer Afanasii Prokof'evich Shchapov (1831-1876). "[B]orn the son of a drunken village sexton and a Buriat (some say Tungus) peasant woman in Irkutsk province," Shchapov's mixed-race ancestry was believed by his fellow regionalists to have been a fundamental influence on his character.[24] Yadrintsev commented on "his boundless love for the fatherland, fire, enthusiasm, devotion to science, and naive, almost childlike trust of people, intermittent gusts of strange scepticism, mistrust and suspicion."[25] A specialist on Russian schismatics, Shchapov was dismissed from his post at Kazan University in 1861 for allegedly inciting

[23] N.M. Yadrintsev, *Sibir' Kak Koloniya* (St Petersburg, 1882).
[24] Alan Wood, *Russia's Frozen Frontier: A History of Siberia and the Russian Far East 1581 - 1991* (London, 2011), p.85.
[25] "Afanasii Prokop'evich Shchapov (nekrolog)," *Izvestia Sibirskogo Otdel Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obschestvo*, №1-2 (1876), p.36.

revolution. He was then exiled back to Irkutsk in 1864. There he dedicated his time to studying the peasants and natives of his home Kudinsk-Lena region under the banner of the then Siberian Branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. Although known for an intellectual inconsistency ("His philosophy ran ahead of him", said Yadrintsev), Shchapov's legacy was his formulation of an influential argument for the existence of a distinct Siberian ethnicity forged due to a combination of environmental and economic factors.[26] Shchapov's works are used throughout this study. Despite his Siberian pride, Shchapov grew disillusioned with his parochial life in exile which, according to Yadrintsev, he compared to a "prison".[27] He died of tuberculosis, widowed, penniless and allegedly mad.

One of the most influential figures in late imperial Irkutsk was Vladimir Platonivich Sukachev (1849-1920). Now best remembered as an art collector, he was the scion of a wealthy Irkutsk merchant family. Sukachev too studied west of the Urals, first in Kiev and then in St Petersburg, before returning home in 1880. His philanthropy funded a number of institutions in the city of his birth, including alms houses, schools, a municipal art gallery and the city theatre. This zeal for civic improvement continued during Sukachev's tenure as mayor of Irkutsk from 1895-1898. His wife's failing health then led the family back to St Petersburg, where he established the journal *Sibirskie Voprosui* in an attempt to raise the profile of Siberia in the metropole.[28] This journal provided a platform for *Irkutyan* and other Siberian writers to share their views on a wider stage. Therefore although not strictly based in Irkutsk, it was a publication with strong personal and political ties to the area. From 1905 to 1908, the journal's editor was the regionalist historian and geographer Pyotr Mikhailovich Golovachev (1862-1913). He also contributed articles on a wide range of topics including Siberian ethnicity and the history of settlement there.

[26] N.M. Yadrinstev, "Zhizn i Trudi A.P. Schapova (okonchanie)," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, August 4, 1883, №31, p.9.
[27] "Afanasii Prokop'evich Shchapov (nekrolog)," p.36.
[28] Igor V. Naumov, *The History of Siberia* (Oxen, 2006), p.142.

There were many others who had a notable impact on Irkutsk's cultural landscape, though they are too numerous to recount here. One distinguished denizen was the Irkutsk-born author, historian, and member of the East Siberian Branch of the IRGS Vsevolod Ivanovich Vagin (1823-1900). Vagin founded the locally-produced newspaper *Sibir'* (1874-1887) which followed a more moderate regionalist line than *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*. Beyond publishers, there were myriad industrious writers, journalists and ethnographers plying their trade in Irkutsk. One final example of this group who it is worth mentioning at this stage is Mikhail Nikolaevich Bogdanov (1878-1920). He has been described as the "outstanding representative of the pre-revolutionary Buriat intelligentsia, a scholar, social activist, publicist, and one of the leaders of the Buriat nationalist movement."[29] Bogdanov was associated with the local branch of the Social Democratic Party, and published a number of essays for the East Siberian IRGS and *Sibir*' under different pseudonyms devoted to his research on the various nomadic Mongolian peoples.

The Siberian St Petersburg, Paris or San Francisco?

When Alexander II emancipated the serfs in 1861, the city of Irkutsk had a population of roughly 37 700, which made it one of the largest settlements in all of Siberia.[30] An 1875 census recorded that Irkutsk was the most urbanised province in East Siberia, with 39 257 town dwellers; whilst this was just 10.78% of the gubernatorial population, the provincial capital accounted for 35 512 of those people.[31] Siberian urban growth remained slow overall, and the 1897 empire-wide census recorded Tomsk and Irkutsk, the latter spurred by the gold mining industry, as the only two Siberian cities with a population in excess of

[29] B.V. Bazarov and L.B. Zhabaeva, *Buryatskiie natsional'nie demokrati i obshchestvenno-politicheskaia misl' mongol'skikh narodov v pervoi treti XX veka* (Ulan-Ude, 2008), p.74.
[30] "Tablitsa Naselenia G. Irkutska," *Izvestia Sibirskogo Otdel Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obschestvo* III, №.4 (November 18, 1872), p.1.
[31] Nizhneudinsk (3 756) and Kirensk at (1 039), were the only other settlements in the province with over one thousand inhabitants: "Naselenie Irkutskoy Guberniy Za 1875 God (Velkuposh)," *Sibir'*, May 22, 1877, №21, p.5.

fifty thousand. By 1911, along with Omsk and Vladivostok, both of these cities had over one hundred thousand inhabitants, and another eleven had surpassed the fifty thousand threshold.[32] Although these urban areas were nowhere near the size of European cities like London, Paris or St Petersburg, the speed and scale of urban growth was unprecedented in Siberian history. The *Irkutyan* cultural class were keen to stress the civilised, 'Russian', perhaps European, qualities of their city and downplay the coarser elements. This was as much about their physical surroundings as their own attitudes. An 1876 article from *Sibir'* proclaimed "Our city continues to beautify its buildings. Beautiful stone edifices have significantly transformed the main street, and some houses and pavements are so elegant that they resemble the capital."[33] However, such renovations remained limited. Before the gold rush brought greater affluence to Irkutsk, people who were acutely aware of the city's provincial, somewhat lacklustre social scene. Nevertheless, the author of the 1876 description of 'The Summer Season in Irkutsk', known only as 'E. Ch.', was careful to frame such remarks in such a way as to attune Irkutsk's society to the rhythm of St Petersburg's 'season', when the wealthy retreated to the countryside to escape the summer heat:

> That's the end of the summer! The season's fun has passed. All the same, we are not very rich in these pleasures. Public life, or more accurately street life, is little developed in the city. In early summer, everyone rushes to the dachas, to the countryside... and the city becomes completely empty. On the streets only the newly-built shops show signs of life; there are few pedestrians and even fewer coaches. The only place you can find an audience in the

[32] Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent*, p.261. As in the cities of European Russia, Siberian municipal populations continued to fluctuate seasonally.
[33] E. Ch., "Letny sezon v Irkutske," *Sibir'*, August 29, 1876, №35, p.3.

course of the summer is the quartermaster's garden where through him one can go swimming, among other things.[34]

The dullness or 'greyness' of Irkutsk society was a common complaint in local publications. For example, while travelling in the Altai region under the banner of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, Yadrintsev expressed his hopes for the celebrations of the tercentenary of Yermak's 'conquest' of Siberia: "Properly executed, such a festival will not pass without a trace of social development, [rather] in many hearts the memory of it will remain a bright spot on the greyish background of life."[35] The relative placidity of Irkutsk's entertainment was not the same as a dearth of consumerist desires.[36]

Irkutsk's social torpor would not have been aided by the simmering social tensions among the educated and wealthy. Local merchants, industrialists and officials all came under fire in the local press. The city's emerging economic elite, Irkutsk's nouveau riche, were characterised as philistines: "These people do not listen to the voices of the intelligentsia or local newspapers... they spit on the printed word."[37] As merchants and artisans constituted three quarters of the municipal population by the late nineteenth century, this was a bold assertion.[38] Local officials were subjected to even greater disdain. Corruption, "lawlessness and disorder" were seen as the "inherent evil" of Siberia, creating a "kingdom of evil" run by pygmy potentates, a "'dung' bureaucracy"

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[34] Ibid.; For an insight into St Petersburg society, see Sir George William Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia, and Other Diplomatic Memories*, 2 vols. (London, 1923); Meriel Buchanan, *Ambassador's Daughter* (London, 1958); E. McCoy [unsigned], *The Englishwoman in Russia: Impressions of the Society and Manners of the Russians at Home. By a Lady, Ten Years Resident in That Country* (New York, 1855).

[35] N. Ya., "Predstoyaschie Trekhsotletiia Sibirii," *Sibir'*, March 2, 1880, №9, p.1.

[36] L. Tiersten, "Redefining Consumer Culture: Recent Literature on Consumption and the Bourgeoisie in Western Europe", *Radical History Review*, 57 (1993), in Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (eds), *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1880-1940* (Oxford, 1998), p.116.

[37] "Katastrofa Na Pereselencheskom Puti," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, July 7, 1883, №27, p.2. "Esche Po Povodu Krestyanskikh Uchrezhdenuy," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, April 14, 1883, №,15, p.8.

[38] Galya Diment, "Exiled from Siberia: The Construction of Siberian Experience by Early Nineteenth Century Irkutsk Writers" in Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine (eds), *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture* (New York, 1993), p.48.

(*'navoznaya' byurokratiya*) more mercenary than the American capitalists and more rapacious than the detested Japanese.[39] None of this was conducive to the creation of a unified society, as can be seen from the following account of a social event in the summer of 1876:

> We had a lady's bazaar in the same quartermaster's garden. Extreme tension and boredom stewed among the public. The reason for this was probably the exact same offishness; a diverse public apparently shy of each other. We do not know how big the market assembly was, but it was probably very significant if its size corresponds to the dullness of the public.[40]

The transformation of Irkutsk into a recognisably modern, Russian city began in earnest with the fire of 1879. To its inhabitants, many of whom saw themselves as Europeans adrift in a dark Asiatic sea, it was a cataclysm. *Sibir'* captured the mood in its 1879 year-in-review: "This year we took a terrible turn. 24th June, 1879 will be remembered for a long time by us and our children. In the annals of Siberia will be noted; 'In the year of such and such, that was the point when half of the city of Irkutsk was gone.'"[41] Between 4th and 6th July, much of the hodgepodge wooden city built up over two hundred and fifty years was razed: "3 600 houses were consumed... Of its 34 000 inhabitants, 20 000 were rendered homeless, and the damages has been estimated at three million roubles."[42] The flames also claimed "ten churches, five bazaars, the great meat market, and a host of public buildings" including the residence of the Governor General, provincial administrative buildings and local branches of national bodies like the Land Survey.[43] Cultural institutions

[39] N., "Osada Sibiri Inostrantsami," *Sibirskie Voprosui* 3, №. 13 (1907): p.16. "Nerazreshennii Voprosi v Sfere Grazhdanskogo Upravleniia Sibiri," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, September 8, 1883, №36, p.4.
[40] E. Ch., "Letnii sezon v Irkutske," p.3.
[41] "Bolee Na Ispol'zovanii 'Irkutyan' Kak Naimenovaniia," *Sibir'*, January 6, 1880, p.1.
[42] Gowing, *Five Thousand Miles in a Sledge*, p.208. Ironically, in the years leading up to this, Irkutsk province had few fires. For example, there were only three reported in the whole of 1877 from a Siberian total of sixty-one: "'Popravit' Vesti' v Techenii Ost N.g. Bilo Pozharov v Guberniakh i Oblastyakh Sibiri," *Sibir'*, January 2, 1877, №1, p.4.
[43] Gowing, *Five Thousand Miles in a Sledge*, p.208.

were equally affected, with both the city library and the premises of the Siberian section of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society falling victim. However, the scale of the destruction made the 1879 fire a watershed moment. Irkutsk, or at least its most important public buildings and wealthy residences, was rebuilt in stone and on a much grander scale befitting "the Paris of Siberia".[44] The city centre was so changed that just a decade later, the Shanghai-based, British journalist Lionel Francis Gowing characterised it wholly in the mould of a sophisticated European city:

> Irkutsk boasts a museum, a theatre, technical and military schools and colleges, an institute for the daughters of noblemen, and a free school of arts founded by a rich merchant. It has a very active Geographical Society, which regularly publishes its proceedings; and altogether it is the intellectual centre of Siberia, owing its ascendency in this respect perhaps to its large admixture of Polish blood. Citizens festively inclined resort in summer to a little public garden with a cafe... At the Moscow Hotel... we found a goodly number of officers in uniform and merchants making merry and exercising themselves at billiards. In the spacious and excellently appointed dining-room we were served with an admirable little *dîner à la carte*, and in every respect we found that the praises which had been bestowed upon the hotel were thoroughly deserved.[45]

[44] For a detailed study of the practical and symbolic significance of fire in the Russian Empire, see Cathy A. Frierson, *All Russia Is Burning! A Cultural History of Fire and Arson in Late Imperial Russia* (Seattle, 2002).
[45] Gowing, *Five Thousand Miles in a Sledge*, pp.209-10.

Electric lighting and the telephone were also introduced around the time that construction began on the Trans-Siberian Railway.[46] The rapid transformation of Irkutsk was paid for largely out of local donations, the source of which was another significant change for the region in the 1880s. The discovery of gold in the Lena river basin to the north "produced a 'gold rush' atmosphere similar to that of California in the mid 1800s," and the region's wealth and population increased significantly and rapidly.[47] Although on a smaller scale, this process had parallels in the breakneck growth of St Petersburg, Moscow and other European Russian cities during the state-led industrialisation drive of the late nineteenth century. Even though residents of these metropolises may well have viewed Irkutsk as a backwater, Gowing was correct when he asserted that it was one of the most culturally vibrant places in Siberia. The gold fields brought unprecedented affluence to the city and fuelled the development of a consumer society. Newspapers began to fill up with advertisements for fine cognac, leather shoes, and other goods. So intense was the competition for sales that articles appeared complaining about the "draconian prices" for posting advertisements and distributing flyers in the city.[48]

Across the Russian Empire, aping western European fashions and mores was akin to a competitive sport. French and German books on etiquette and 'civilised' behaviour generated large sales by the late nineteenth century. These ideas were combined with new aesthetic tastes in everything from clothes to decor and place settings, with British influence especially strong in these areas.[49] Moreover, these connections were not recent. Peter the Great had his 'window on Europe', and Catherine the Great opened it further. The

[46] Irkutsk acquired electric streetlights in 1896. By 1913, its power station had 2 593 subscribers, up from just 505 in 1911, making the municipal power station "one of the most profitable enterprises in the city economy", and a testament to rising prosperity; "Tarif Po Elektrichestvo E Abonenti (na Gorodskiia Temi)," *Irkutskaya Gazeta*, №. 3 (November 4, 1913) p.2.

[47] Sharon Hudgins, *The Other Side of Russia: A Slice of Life in Siberia and the Russian Far East*, 1st edn, Eastern European Studies, №21 (College Station, Texas, 2003), p.75.

[48] *Irkutsk Kopeek*, №3 (2nd November, 1910), p.2.

[49] Steve Smith, Catriona Kelly, and Louise McReynolds, "Commercial Culture and Consumerism," in Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (eds), *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1880-1940* (Oxford, 1998), pp.130-3.

xenophobia often attributed to late imperial Russian high society was tempered by strikingly cosmopolitan influences. A pervasive pan-European influence from birth meant that "the role of the English nanny, the French governess and the German tutor in the upbringing of the Russian nobility had no precedent in Europe."[50] Although Irkutsk was not home to the commanding heights of Russian society, many of its middle-ranking and often increasingly wealthy residents took pride in accruing the trappings of civilisation for their city and themselves. As in other large Siberian municipalities like Omsk, Tomsk and Tobolsk, Irkutsk "began to bear a strong resemblance to the towns of European Russia; churches, cathedrals, and public buildings were in imperial style prevalent in European Russia; it was only beyond Lake Baikal that the more Oriental-influenced urban style prevailed."[51]

It had long been the lure of profit that had attracted outsiders to Irkutsk. But with China and then Japan prised open by rapacious Great Power commercial interests, and with ever improving global transportation links, Irkutsk became an increasingly frequent stop for the more 'adventurous' traveller.[52] They came as often from North America as from Europe, and their works are a useful if not altogether unproblematic source. Travel writing that detailed the non-European parts of the world "created the imperial order for Europeans 'at home'", and gave them "a sense of ownership, entitlement and familiarity" with far-off lands.[53] Tales of the dark, endless Siberian taiga and the wild

[50] Alfred J. Rieber, "The Sedimentary Society", in Edith W. Clowes, James L. West, and Samuel D. Kassow (eds), *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton, 1991), p.352.
[51] Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent*, p.284.
[52] The opening of China and Japan, and the longstanding allure of India, brought a steady stream of genteel travellers to the east. For example, see Isabella L., Lady Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan, An Account of Travels in the Interior Including Visits to the Aborigines of Yedo and the Shrine of Nikko* (London, 1888), [viewed: 16/08/2009] Available from https://archive.org/details/unbeatentracksi01birdgoog.
[53] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed (Routledge, 2008), p.3; Stacy Burton, *Travel Narrative and the Ends of Modernity* (New York, 2013); Steven H. Clark (ed.), *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit* (London, 1999); David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*, Post-Contemporary Interventions (Durham, 1993), See also ; David N Wells, *Russian Views of Japan, 1792-1913: An Anthology Of Travel Writing* (London, 2004).

Central Asian steppes functioned in much the same way.[54] Some visitors, like L.F. Gowing, who had hit upon the notion of his journey "round the tiffin-table" while "'Jack', the tall, burly, beaming-faced Chinese head-boy, was busily employed in the dispensation of cooling liquors", were won over by Irkutsk's newly bought charms. [55] Others took more convincing. Many, like his compatriot and fellow travel writer John Foster Fraser, saw the city as nothing more than a louche facsimile, an American-style frontier mining town masquerading as a civilised European city:

> And so we were in Irkutsk, four thousand miles east of Moscow, further east, indeed, than Mandalay: a thriving, jostling, gay city - 'the Paris of Siberia' you call it when you want to please... It is not a description I would apply myself. Irkutsk is more like a restless, bustling Western American town near the region of gold diggings.[56]

These observers sought to undercut what they saw as the pomposity of the city's inhabitants and highlighted the cracks in its European facade. John Foster Fraser described an illogical saturnalia where "all the sanitary arrangements were unsanitary"; open sewers, unpaved streets, few stone buildings and hotel waiters shoving moss into crevices in walls with one hand whilst pouring fine champagne with the other.[57] The great cities of Europe were little different in this respect. The self-consciously imperial grandeur of St Petersburg was undercut by sprawling tenements and suburbs filled with wooden shacks, dirt roads, a lack of basic amenities and rising pollution. Irkutsk's more sceptical guests also sought to highlight the city's less 'cultural' activities, such as its renowned drinking culture: "In Irkutsk, eating and gambling were pastimes, but drinking was a way of life".[58] They spoke of endless games of cards and

[54] Two of the most notable examples are Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, *Sakhalin Island* (Oxford, 2007), and Ivan Aleksandrovich Goncharov, *The Frigate Pallada* (New York, 1987).
[55] Gowing, *Five Thousand Miles in a Sledge*, p.1.
[56] Sir John Foster Fraser, *The Real Siberia, Together with an Account of a Dash through Manchuria* (London, 1904), p.83. [viewed: 14/09/2014] Available from http://www.archive.org/details/realsiberiatoget00frasuoft.
[57] Ibid., pp.86-89.
[58] Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent*, p.264-5.

dice until midnight, followed by luxurious dinners of suckling pig, veal and sturgeon washed down by "immense quantities of alcohol … and singing until the early hours in the city's bawdy *cafes chantants*."[59] Visiting Russians also made similar criticisms. Anton Chekhov was appalled by the inhabitants' drunkenness during his stay there: "We searched the village all evening to buy a chicken, but didn't find one. But there is vodka! Russians are terrible pigs. If you ask why they don't eat meat or fish, they explain that there is no transport, roads are bad etc., but there's as much vodka as you like even in the remotest villages."[60]

One of the key recurring themes for visitors seeking to stress Irkutsk's frontier way of life was the city's crime rate. Even experienced travellers claimed to be shocked. The British Liberal MP Henry Norman, later 1st Baronet, a seasoned travel writer who had extensively toured Japan and the Near East before undertaking a trip across the Russian Empire, and who claimed his *modus operandi* was "strenuous endeavour to be far and frank in one's judgements, and so far as one may, to divest oneself of inborn and acquired prejudices" was shocked at

> an amount of crime, actual and potential that would be considered excessive in a new mining-camp. The night before I arrived a church was ransacked of its plate; the night of my arrival the principal jeweller's shop was robbed; a few days later a flourishing manufactory of false passports - a peculiarly heinous crime in Russia - was raided by the police; the day I visited the prison, a man clubbed nearly to death, who never recovered consciousness, was picked up in the street; a short time previously the mail, carrying gold-dust, had been ambushed and three of its armed guards shot; and no respectable citizen would dream of passing alone through its suburbs after dark. Indeed people often fire a revolver shot out

[59] Ibid.
[60] Donald Rayfield, *Anton Chekhov: A Life* (Evanston, 1998), p.227.

> of the window before going to bed, to remind whom it may concern that a strong man armed keepeth his goods.[61]

As time passed, fewer observers reported actually encountering any trouble themselves. Yet most were happy to repeat salacious tales, seemingly seeing them as key to the city's mien. The account of William Oliver Greener, a British weapons expert and journalist who covered the Russo-Japanese War for *The Times*, depicted Irkutsk as a nightmarish manifestation of Oriental lawlessness and depravity:

> Siberian towns, even capitals like Tomsk, Irkutsk, and Khabarovsk, are squalid, mean, and unkempt…The streets are badly illuminated, and after dark are roamed by great yard-dogs - mastiffs and other fierce brutes - which are trained to take little or no attention of the few pedestrians who tramp noisily along the side-walks, but approach and commence to attack if one hesitates but so long as necessary to determine whether to turn to right or left. The dogs of Constantinople are lapdogs in comparison to these savage wolf-like mongrels turned loose in all Siberian towns and villages after dark…Crime is prevalent in all Siberian towns; murders, assaults, outrages, and burglary are the common forms. Garrotting is the usual device of the footpad. With a short stick or a noose of twine, he approaches his victim stealthily from the rear, slips the cord over his head, and strangles the man, woman, or child, who is unable to utter a cry. Then he strips the body of everything likely to lead to its identification and decamps. If there is an accomplice he blocks

[61] Henry Norman, *All the Russias: Travels and Studies in Contemporary European Russia, Finland, Siberia, the Caucasus, & Central Asia*, Second Edition (London, 1902), pp.146-7, [viewed: 13/10/2012] Available from http://archive.org/details/allrussiastra00norm. This is a reference to Luke 11:21, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace."

> the stranger's advance or engages his attention at the right moment.[62]

Greener and Norman's accounts are symptomatic of two of the main issues in attempting to ascertain the value of travel writing; the tendency to defer to previous works and a reversion to what Mary Louise Pratt refers to as "codes".[63] In the preface to his book *All the Russias...*, Norman deferred to the works of Sir Donald MacKenzie Wallace, which he said "remain, when allowance is made for the changes since their publication, the most instructive and trustworthy general work upon Russia."[64] As evidence of this mindset, Greener's hellish depiction does not include any examples of criminality that he actually witnessed, or that even occurred during his stay. However, the continued repetition of such ideas means that they accrue the "material presence or weight" of fact, regardless of how the situation may change.[65] Travel writing, much like the colonial-domestic anthropology at the centre of this study, tends to lean on comparatives. Authors were apt to interpret new lands through the prism of places already familiar to them and their readers. By undermining the image of Irkutsk as the 'Paris of Siberia' and instead characterising it as frontier mining settlement, John Foster Fraser replaced the "codes" of civilisation, however crassly manifested, with those denoting barbarity and wildness. In doing so he removed Irkutsk from the milieu of European progress and deposited it on the 'uncivilised' periphery. Such imagery provides a useful illustration of the recycling of familiar European ideas and their redeployment in Russian imperial contexts. In this way, travel and travel writing, "frequently affirmed the values and precedence of the centre, under the guise of taking a 'genuine' critical interest".[66]

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[62] William Oliver Greener, *Greater Russia: The Continental Empire of the Old World* (London, 1903), p.117.
[63] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.4.
[64] Norman, *All the Russias*, p.viii.
[65] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1974), p.94 quoted in Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, p.23.
[66] Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, p.6.

Cultural Networks

It was along Siberia's improving communicative circuits - road, rail, water and telegraph - that Irkutsk province received the visitors, goods and cultural materials that formed its connections to the wider Russian Empire and beyond. The variability of the water and road routes in the late nineteenth century made regular journeys to the capitals undesirable, expensive and impractical, which emphasised the already "great importance attached to the mails."[67] Given the symbolic and actual importance of this link, many *Irkutyani* felt themselves thoroughly disadvantaged in comparison to more reliably serviced locations:

> From this regular facility one envies not only the timely receipt of newspapers, letters, etc., but also the interests and ties that go with them - financial, business, and familial. Of the hundreds and thousands of people passing along the Siberian tract each year, hardly anyone, except the privileged, have a good word to say about the Siberian postal service.[68]

In the pre-railway era, mail was prohibitively expensive and even in optimum conditions took a minimum of nineteen days to reach European Russia. When the Trans-Siberian became operational, there was a daily mail train running in each direction between Moscow and Vladivostok, stopping at Irkutsk on the way. This was certainly transformative, but as mentioned previously, the Trans-Siberian was not an especially reliable service.

Written media were perhaps the most tangible means of cultural exchange during this period. They were "the chief source of information and attitudes, an arena in which writers and other literate people could learn more and absorb more culture than in any part of Russia's explicit education system" as well as "a centre around which writers would structure their social and literary

[67] "Pochtovaya Sluzhba v Sibiri," *Sibir'*, March 21, 1882, №12, p.1.
[68] Ibid.

identity."[69] This study focuses mainly on newspapers and journals, and these were certainly plentiful in Irkutsk province. Local observers believed wholeheartedly in the power and importance of the printed word in forging, maintaining and educating a robust *Irkutyan* civil society:

> The influence of the newspaper on each of its readers is not limited to the narrow frame of the territory of that particular nation. The newspaper crosses mountains, swims oceans and introduces the reader, so to speak, into the global parliament. A reader listens to the views of Bismarck or Gladstone, follows the parliamentary struggles in France or Germany, enters the bowels of the distant margins of Asia; he is, in short, a resident of the world, while at the same time sitting by the friendly, flickering fireside at home. Let us go one better. The public newspaper not only traces the progress of thought, but informs the reader of the latest advances in science and the arts, and so becomes a popular university.[70]

There is ample evidence of a steady market for European Russian publications in Irkutsk city. By the time of the Great Reforms, and undoubtedly long before, the flow of cultural materials into Irkutsk was well-established. This is most obvious from the lists of subscriptions advertised in local publications. These were not just for famed journals and newspapers from the capitals such as *Novoe Vremya* or *Otechestvennie Zapiski*, but also professional and technical journals, as well as publications from the empire's various regions. Despite the disdain shown to them by sections of the Irkutsk cultural class, the native *Irkutyan* writer Nikolai Shchukin claimed that "all local merchants have rich libraries, [and] subscribe to all journals and all newly published books."[71] Whether such collections were indicative of a thriving literary scene or merely

[69] Belknap, 'Survey of Russian Journals', p.92.
[70] "Novaya Gazeta," *Sibir'*, March 14, 1882, №11, p.2.
[71] Quoted in S. Postrov (ed.), *Ocherki russkoi literatury Sibirii* (Novosibirsk, Nauka, 1982), vol. 1, p.201, quoted in Diment, "Exiled from Siberia", p.48.

a status symbol is impossible to say. Nevertheless, they show the prestige attached to the printed word. Further evidence of increased demand can be seen in the growth of the city's publishing and printing industry in this period. Irkutsk's first genuine weekly publication, *Irkutskskiya Gubernskiya Vedomosti*, was founded in the late 1850s. The newspaper *Sibirskii Vestnik* appeared in 1864. The first regular publication to closely resemble the format and content of a 'Western' newspaper was V.I. Vagin's *Sibir'*. As mentioned earlier, N.M. Yadrinstev's *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* also switched its base from St Petersburg to Irkutsk in 1888, where it remained until it was closed down by the government in 1906. There were many others, often not lasting more than a year or two, and some as little as a few months. Some, like the *Trans-Baikal Railway Herald*, were nothing more than official newsletters, whilst *The Gadfly* was a roughly-hewn, *Punch*-style, illustrated satire. The gradual improvement of communications meant that these publications relayed world events from Russia and beyond to Irkutsk's literate population with increasing speed and reliability.

These locally-produced newspapers and journals also served other functions which their creators often saw as much more important. The editors of *Sibir'* were typical in their assertion that "our newspaper [is] dedicated to the development of local questions and critical discussion of the phenomena of local public life."[72] They sought to instil a self-conscious civic identity in the 'ordinary' people of the province. The inaugural issue of a new publication usually set out such aims:

> In creating the present edition of the newspaper, the editors set out to enable the mainly low-income sector of society, for a relative pittance, charging one kopek for our newspaper, to be aware of the interests of our society, and events occurring with our Empire and abroad. The most serious attention is paid to local life. To this end, we are happy to present these pages to our readers.

[72] "Roman i rasskaz v Sibirii," *Sibir'*, March 10, 1876, №40, p.1.

> Here, everyone can share their thoughts with the community and celebrate those phenomena of a public nature. Therefore, the editors invite readers to report these facts, and will not hesitate to present them. Every message that has public interest will be accepted and used appreciatively.[73]

Local publications like *Sibirskie Voprosui* often portrayed themselves as a public service, a forum for the exchange of ideas between the small, and in the case of exiles, isolated provincial intelligentsia: "We are especially pleased to give space to all public manifestations of Siberian civic ideas, the collective creation of local individuals."[74] As technological advances in communications and transport drew Irkutsk ever closer to the metropole and the city's population broke the 100 000 barrier at the turn of the century, gauging and harmonising local opinion became especially important to those seeking to forge a robust *Irkutyan* identity. Such aims were in keeping with how many in the wider Russian press envisaged their role. This notion was strengthened by continued delays to the introduction of *zemstvo* government in Siberia and was particularly notable in regionalist publications such as *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*. They stressed the necessity of civic-mindedness and philanthropy as a means of demonstrating *Irkutyan* self-consciousness. This was to be done not only through local organisations such as those established to help settlers or educate the region's peasants, but also by visibly rallying to all-Russian causes such as the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8. An editorial in *Sibir'* described how

> Russian society has passionately taken to its heart the present events in the Balkan Peninsula. St Petersburg roused itself in the face of events, garnered extraordinary commitment, and now tries to convey this to all Russia. Gradually, interest in events and

[73] I.S. Kokovin, "Chitatelyam," *Irkutskaya Kopeika*, October 30, 1910, №1, p.1. See also "Vazhnii Vopros Dlya Sibirskogo Krest'yanstva," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, August 4, 1883, №31, pp.1-2.
[74] "Nashim Chitatelyam," *Sibirskie Voprosui* 3, №13 (1907), p.1. In this instance, the editors intended it to be a literal surrogate for the Duma, which had been prorogued in June 1906, and would not be reconvened until February 1907.

> feelings excited by them are penetrating the most remote environments... From various parts of Russia come different personalities with knapsacks, arms, and field dress; one goal, one feeling, one idea to connect people of different estates and even different nations.[75]

Regionalist editors like V.I. Vagin framed their hopes for local participation in simultaneously all-Russian, pan-Slavic and explicitly colonial terms, noting that

> in the distant colonies of the New World they often raise a toast to the European idea of the victory of a particular principle. Under the scorching sun of India, in Hong Kong, along the coast of Africa, in the deserts of Texas, English, German or French... grasping eagerly for a sheet of newspaper to find out what concerns the lives of the central continent, exchanged by the German and Mediterranean Sea. How, in our East, is this solidarity of feelings and ideas that happens in Europe expressed?[76]

They were therefore pleased to note that it was "clear that in the common sea of donations to the Slavic case, a stream flows from the icy Siberian fields... the Siberian penny has made its contribution for the benefit of the oppressed Slavs." [77] Falling back on the imagery of light and dark, civilisation and barbarity, they stressed that even though local "society has yet to take shape… [and] not yet developed concepts of civil public interests," there was nevertheless ample evidence that Irkutsk was tending the guiding light of civilisation in Asia:

> Siberians sacrificing for the Slavs... the instinct of human solidarity, the instinct of humane love and self-sacrifice exists within their remote, downtrodden areas... the poor, undeveloped society in

[75] "Uchastiie Sibiri v slavyanskom dele," *Sibir'*, November 28, 1876, №48.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

> our borderlands, called to the light and life of all mankind, will be able to show itself worthy of this single, global community animated by the high ideals of civilisation.[78]

There was a strong desire among the Irkutsk cultural class to set the agenda, provide enlightenment, and "dominate the articulation of social values."[79] The messianic, missionary self-importance of the classical European civilising mission comes through clearly in this extract from the St Petersburg-based *Sibirskie Voprosui*, whose complaints about censorship echo many of the sentiments of *Irkutsk Kopeek*:

> Siberia is on the verge of elections to the State Duma and must, of course, begin this important act by preparing carefully, finding out the *pia desideria* and qualities of the candidates. How can this be done without the help of the local press? In this task the press plays a pre-eminent role in reporting the facts, giving instructions and explanations, even in those countries where public life is highly developed, where unions, organisations, public meetings and orators formulate public opinion. There is nothing of this sort in Siberia. The local press is the only means of drawing out some kind of public opinion from utter darkness *(vivesti obshchestvennoe mnenie iz absoliutnoi temnoti*) and giving men the opportunity to navigate their surroundings... Only by printing the collective intelligence of the local community can we understand local characteristics, determine local conditions and find out details which, perhaps, differ in practice from what is presented in theory.[80]

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[78] Ibid.
[79] Jeffrey Brooks, "Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era", in William Mills Todd and Robert L. Belknap (eds), *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800-1914* (Stanford, 1978), p.97.
[80] L., "Iz Khorniki Obschestvennoi Zhizni Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №.2 (1906), p.92.

The level of localism varied by publication and events in the Russian Empire at that particular time but Irkutsk news, or at least Siberian news, was often the focus of the local press. Whilst the semi-official weekly *Irkutskiya Gubernskiya Vedomostii* printed imperial decrees and Senate decisions on its front page, it also devoted much of its output to everyday local news such as court and police reports. *Irkutskaya Gazeta* was even more overtly local in its aims. In the debut issue in October 1913, its editors staked their position: "The life of the city, province, Siberia and then all of Russia will be of interest to us in that precise order; city, provinces, etc., will be opened to us, again, in that order."[81]

There is ample evidence that Irkutsk residents not were not just passive consumers of content delivered from the metropole, but actively engaged in two-way dialogue with its producers.[82] As befitted an internationally renowned scientific organisation, the East Siberian Branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society produced material for both Russian and international markets, as well as reviewing texts from around the world. Its largely local focus was in keeping with the rest of the city's media and was a logical extension of the organisation's Russocentric national model. Reviews of foreign books were found in a section called 'New books and articles with geographical content pertinent to East Siberia'. Local newspapers did the same thing, although not with the same imperial and international reach; *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* had a 'Literary Chronicle' section, for example, and *Sibirskii Letopis* had 'Literary Notes', in which both reviewed books or articles that had made their way eastward.

Related to this, the other key task the Irkutsk press took upon themselves was the dissemination of accurate information regarding their homeland back to the metropole. One contributor to *Sibir'* welcomed the proposed St Petersburg launch of Yadrintsev's *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* in 1882 with an enthusiasm that epitomised the desire of many Siberian patriots to represent their land in the

[81] *Irkutskaya Gazeta*, №1 (October 21, 1913), p.2.
[82] For example, the debate surrounding Siberia's Jews in Chapter 5.

best light and in their own words, to challenge what they saw as the lingering ignorance of the metropole: "It is needless to discuss here how important this is, so that Siberian life is honestly reflected in such a mirror that does not distort the countenance of the country. This is both a necessity for Russian readers, and useful for the *Sibiriakii* themselves."[83]

Faltering success in this endeavour led to mounting frustration among Irkutsk's publicists at the self-absorbed and ill-informed metropolitan treatment of "the provinces (*provintsia*) - that is, all of Russia excluding Moscow and St Petersburg"; "The Petersburg and Moscow press have spoken again about the provinces, complaining again that the provinces are sleeping, that living here is colourless, etc... by their logic, life in the periphery must be an interminable wrench, and us vermin (*gadi*) not even comparable to some glib provincial centre in the Urals."[84] Even after decades of improvements in transport and communications links, and the spotlight cast by the events of the Russo-Japanese War and the 1905 Revolution, in 1913 the *Irkutskaya Gazeta* could justifiably rail against the "cute ignorance" of the metropole:

> That in our centres they have very wrong ideas about us *Sibiriakii*, we have known now for a very long time. Our distances are measured in the thousands, or even tens of thousands of versts, but they squeeze us into a few dozen and then write about how bears roam freely on the streets of our cities, and... [other] stories that are no less incredible.[85]

Such bitterness and frustration were common. *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* denounced the "frivolous publicists of *Novoe Vremya* and the embittered, failed, Siberian staff of *Sibirskogo Vestnika*."[86] These grievances also reinforced

[83] "Novaya Gazeta," p.1.
[84] "Novie Retsepti Dlya Ozhivleniya Provintsy," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, №39 (September 26, 1893) p.1.
[85] "Osvedomlennost Stolichnikh Gazet," *Irkutskaya Gazeta*, №8 (December 9, 1913) p.1.
[86] "K Voprosu o Vliyany Pereselentsev Na Zemledel'cheskoye Naselenie Sibiri," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, September 8, 1891, №37, p.1.

belief in the importance local self-awareness. By 1880, *Sibir'* conceded that whilst there was "no disputing that the Petersburg press pulls us along" on many issues, they felt that its metropolitan focus meant that it had become inadequate for the needs of Irkutsk's citizens, since "a chastening indictment of some public figure in the capital, or some other phenomenon of city life, [only] influences our lives indirectly."[87] The detachment of the metropole was seen to be so great that these heated scandals were "too remote, and come to the periphery in a highly attenuated form. So insignificant an act as burning logs on the fire is not without influence on the temperature of the universe and ... locals are no longer sensitive to the heat from this remote fireplace." [88] The writer concluded with a rallying call for local activism, stating "We cannot subsist with what comes to us from the Petersburg press. For us to have a contingent of writers, artists and musicians to the same extent that they do in European Russia, it is necessary that our local society takes an interest in local issues pertaining to local life."[89]

Written media was not the only means by which Irkutsk participated in cultural exchange. Across the empire, many intelligentsia were convinced of the power of theatre as a motor for social progress and the edification of the masses. Even in the pre-Reform era, when the 'masses' were few in the empire's cities and the state still retained its monopoly on drama, ballet and opera in Moscow and St Petersburg, it was said by one observer in the 'eastern' imperial city of Tbilisi that witnessing high quality performance art "cultivates taste, acquaints us with the works of great artists, with the ideas of geniuses, and presents to the crowd the beginnings of the fine arts, that is, the most noble aspirations of humanity."[90] Murray Frame has downplayed the usefulness of Russian theatre in this regard. Rather, he asserts that its real value was as a "school for citizens" that trained Russia's nascent civil society in the habits of organisation and

[87] "Sibirskaya Zhizn Kak Pochva Dlya Iskusstva," p.1.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Jersild and Malkadze, "The Dilemmas of Enlightenment in the Eastern Borderlands ", p.295.

professionalism.[91] This chimes with the commonplace view at the time that "For us [Russians], plays and theatres are what parliamentary affairs and speeches are for Western Europe."[92] Whether as a tool for the enlightenment of the lower classes or a crucible for forging civil identity, these functions were held to be even more important in the provinces, especially Siberia, where the zemstvo reforms were slow to materialise. An editorial in the first edition of the amalgamated theatrical journal *Teatral'naya Rossiya/Teatral'naya Gazeta* stated that "In the life of the provinces, theatre occupies, of course, a very prominent position, and certainly plays a more important role than theatre in the capital... [A] unifying social platform such as the theatre can contribute to the lively exchange of feelings, impressions and ideas. Against the humdrum monotony of life, provincial theatre, it seems, must draw the masses to it... "[93]

Irkutsk did not have a professional theatre before the 1879 fire, but the reconstruction efforts attracted sufficient artistic patronage to rectify this and provide for the formation of two companies of actors. The impressive new Municipal Theatre became the centre of the city's stage scene. Like other provincial theatres, Irkutsk's playhouses had a rapid turnover of shows, up to three per week, as they tried to balance the competing demands of their audience with limited resources of space, money and personnel. Judging by the listings in the Irkutsk press, the city's dramatic repertoire was broadly reflective of Russian theatre in general, showing a mixture of canonical classics and works by more modern writers like Gorky. They did not tend to go their own way, but followed what had been successful in the metropole in both style and content, so that the turn of the century, "provincial dramatic theatre was effectively wholly integrated with the artistic practices of the Imperial Theatres in the capitals."[94] Desiring to show that European culture was thriving in their

[91] Murray Frame, *School for Citizens: Theatre and Civil Society in Imperial Russia* (New Haven, 2006).
[92] I.O. Ivanov, "O sovremennoi nevrastenii istarom geroizme", *Teatr i iskusstvo*, №50 (1899), pp.900-1, quoted in Victor Borovsky, "Russian Theatre in Russian Culture", in Robert Leach and Victor Borovsky (eds), *A History of Russian Theatre* (Cambridge, 1999), p.11.
[93] *Teatral'naya Rossiia/Teatral'naya Gazeta* №1 (St. Petersburg, November 12, 1904) p.29.
[94] Catriona Kelly, "Popular, Provincial and Amateur Theatres", in Robert Leach and Victor Borovsky (eds), *A History of Russian Theatre* (Cambridge, 1999), pp.136-7.

Asian outpost, the local theatres frequently showed plays by the likes of Shakespeare and Molière, as well as famed Russian dramatists such as Anton Chekhov and Alexander Ostrovsky. Following the ending of the state theatrical monopoly in 1882, troupes from St Petersburg and Moscow began to tour the provinces. These events, and new plays from outside the classical canon, were often billed as "a big hit in the Imperial Theatre" or "enjoying huge success across all the European scenes" in an attempt to entice sceptical customers.[95] Thus Victor Borovksy's characterisation of Russian theatre as "a theatrical form taken ready made from Western Europe, and the professional expertise of foreign actors, singers and dancers... gradually applied to a new, national context" can also be extended to the relationship between the metropolitan stage and provincial theatre in Irkutsk.[96] In this way, theatrical productions were similar to printed journals and newspapers in illustrating the vibrancy of cultural networks disseminating Russian and 'Western' culture to Irkutsk.

For their part, the Irkutsk press published what was often frank criticism of local productions.[97] Moreover, the city's cultural output became more of a presence in theatrical journals based in the metropole. Initially, this was nothing more than inclusion in the listings of provincial theatres. However, as the mails became more reliable and cultural exchanges increased, there appeared longer contributions from Irkutsk writers detailing the local theatrical scene. Analyses of the plays staged, the quality of the performances and so on appeared in Moscow and St Petersburg-based publications such as *Teatral'naya Biblioteka*.[98] Similarly, there were numerous concerts and musical events that continued this Europeanised theme. These were often memorials to great Russian cultural heroes, such as a commemoration of the death of Tolstoy in 1910, or a concert held on the twentieth anniversary of the

[95] *Irkutskaya Kopeika*, October 31, 1910, №,2; *Irkutskaya kopeika* (3rd November, 1910), №4, p.1.
[96] Borovsky, "Russian Theatre in Russian Culture", p.7.
[97] For example, see Isaak G., "Teatral'nie Vpechatleniia," *Irkutskaya Gazeta*, №3 (November 4, 1913): p.2; The reviewer claimed the production *Mother's Blessing* would only be entertaining for "a grandmother... lapsed into senility."
[98] For example, see *Teatral'naya Biblioteka*, Vol. 10, Book. 1, №37 (May 1894), p.77.

death of Tchaikovsky which "attracted a great number of the public, and was a great success."[99] In spite of the generally positive and self-congratulatory tone of these reports, there was an occasional frustrated voice. An 1880 article in *Sibir'* by a contributor calling themselves 'Ingenuous Sibiriak' complained that "these musical societies are completely insignificant. They did not nurture a single person, did not educate anyone, but eked out an existence for their own pleasures."[100]

Another means of entertainment available to inhabitants of Irkutsk was film. The city had its first film screening as early as 1897. This is broadly in line with the arrival of film in the provincial cities of the British Empire; Bombay and Melbourne had their first screenings in 1896, Canada in 1897. There were several cinemas in Irkutsk by the turn of the century, with the Italian migrant Antonio Michele Donatello ('Don Otello') owning two, the 'Illusion' and the 'Electric Illusion'. The largest cinema in the city was the 'Artistic' on the main thoroughfare. The Illusion showed some of the earliest films, but also *Pathé* newsreels. Whilst cinema reels may not have engendered the heavyweight debates that journals and theatre did, they allowed the residents of Irkutsk to see events in Russia, Europe and beyond with much more immediacy than ever before. For example, the coronation of Tsar Nicholas II was committed to film and shown in theatres across the empire.

The traditional historiographical view of late imperial Russian civil society is extremely pessimistic. It draws a public sphere that was at worst non-existent, and at best a series of small, fractious groups struggling under the yoke of an autocratic state.[101] However, more recent studies of a plethora of independent

[99] "Simfonichesky Kontsert," *Irkutskaya Gazeta*, №5 (November 18, 1913), p.3.
[100] Prostodushny Sibiriak, "Ocherk Obshchestvennoi Zhizni I Progressa," *Sibir'*, February 10, 1880, №6, p.6.
[101] Adele Lindenmeyr, "'Primordial and Gelatinous'? Civil Society in Imperial Russia," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, №3 (Summer 2011): pp.705-20.

and semi-independent organisations has altered these perceptions.[102] Commonalities with other European states have been uncovered, to the extent that Joseph Bradley has described "a public sphere and an associational life based on the model of the European Enlightenment."[103] With the social and economic changes engendered by the Great Reforms, Russia's cities began to grow "a sampling of Victorian-era civic organisations" with "extensive publications, including *Izvestiia* (News), *Zapiski* (Notes), *Trudy* (Proceedings) and so forth... the societies held meetings at particular venues and had officers. Some sponsored expeditions, organised exhibitions and founded museums."[104] There were more than ten thousand of these societies scattered across the empire's major cities, towns and even minor provincial sites by the turn of the twentieth century.[105] Whilst it is true that much of tsarist civil society was not particularly stable or secure, these organisations were a significant linking mechanism between provincial and metropolitan cultural networks. They helped to foster vibrant civil societies that should not be judged as deficient against an arbitrary 'Western' standard.[106]

As illustrated above, Bradley's criteria for the development of a civil society - economic growth, social mobility, urbanisation, improved provision of education and the desire to forge "new public identities" - were self-consciously manifested in Irkutsk.[107] Moreover, the city's status as a regional political, administrative and cultural hub meant that it had divisions of numerous all-Russian learned and cultural societies such as the Imperial Academy of Science Ethnographic Museum. The most renowned national outlet was the East Siberian Branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. The Russian Geographical Society was founded in 1845 with a charter

[102] Joseph Bradley, "Subjects into Citizens: Societies, Civil Society, and Autocracy in Tsarist Russia," *The American Historical Review* 107, №4 (October 1, 2002), pp.1094-1123, [viewed 28/04/2014] doi:10.1086/587012; Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2009).
[103] Bradley, "Subjects into Citizens," p.1096.
[104] Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia*, p.x.
[105] Ibid., p1.
[106] Bradley, "Subjects into Citizens," pp.1104.
[107] Ibid., p.1105.

modelled on Britain's Royal Geographical Society and an inclusive entrance policy that welcomed a wide range of scientists, scholars and reforming bureaucrats in its mission to uncover more about Russians and their empire.[108] Irkutsk's *raznochintsy* and exile populations, and the society's subscriptions, were aided by this relaxed attitude. It organised expeditions, ran a museum and archive and produced regular publications detailing its works. These were both published locally and fed back to the Society's headquarters in St Petersburg, which dutifully informed its members of provincial developments. Improvements in infrastructure also led to increased travel of members from the various sections around the empire. Perhaps reflective of this success, the Society for the Study of Siberia and the Understanding of her Life, founded in St Petersburg in 1908, was consciously all-imperial and collaborative in nature. The deliberately low criteria for starting a branch were appealing to Siberia's motley cultural class:

> it needs only four sympathetic persons in a place of residence and letters exchanged with some member of the Society in St Petersburg who is already on the board to raise the question. In this way, Siberia can be covered by a network of branches; this is extremely important for both the central office of the Society in closely linking it with local life and providing it with fresh and rich material, and the departments which will receive advice, guidance and a clear vision from St Petersburg since the work of small, individual cells can sometimes become narrow and esoteric.[109]

Irkutsk also had other, more locally-oriented societies, such as the Musical Literary Society founded in 1882.[110] Whilst many of these were aimed at the

[108] The prefix 'Imperial' was added in 1849. Britain's Royal Geographical Society was founded in 1830, following the French *Société de Géographie* in 1821 and the Prussian *Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin* in 1828.
[109] R., "Obshchestvo Izucheniya Sibiri i Uluchsheniya Eya Buita," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №10 (1908): p.25.
[110] "To Rasporyaditelei Vnov' Uchrezhdamaego Muzikalno-Literaturnogo Obshestvo," *Sibir'*, January 31, 1882, №5, p.10.

cultural edification of the masses, others had an expressly charitable aim. They too engaged in dialogue with the metropole through print media. Philanthropic societies also provided the bourgeois women of Irkutsk society with a 'suitable' outlet for their civil energies. This was a reflection of what was happening in the capitals, where industrialisation and urbanisation provided both surplus wealth and a greater concentration of the benighted for middle and upper class women to focus on. It was claimed that Irkutsk women could trace their philanthropy back to the wives of the Decembrists, who "revealed to Siberia what it is to be an educated and cultured woman…With such an example to observe and imitate, the *sibiryachka* could not but marvel at the wives of the Decembrists, their way of life, and their personalities. Their cultural influence on the Siberian woman is beyond doubt."[111] Educational societies were one of the most common branches of philanthropy for late imperial women. There were two noteworthy societies for public enlightenment in Irkutsk by the early twentieth century; the Commission for Popular Readings and The Brotherhood of St Innocent.[112] The tone adopted by local commentator A. Chernov in his description of the work of these societies can be understood as part of the Irkutsk cultural class's drive to characterise their city as a Siberian cultural beacon. To stress his point, Chernov stated that these societies had been founded because even "In such a large and cultural Siberian city as Irkutsk" there were "not enough schools and educational institutions for all seekers of knowledge, [so] the local community naturally has to turn its attention to non-formal education."[113] He went so far as to claim that "it should be noted that in this respect [i.e. the provision of educational activities], the city of Irkutsk is far ahead of all other towns" in Siberia.[114] Indeed, in 1897 Irkutsk boasted

[111] I., "Kulturnaya Rol Zhenschini v Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №49-52 (1908), pp.5-6.
[112] A. Chernov, "Kulturnaya Rabota v Irkutskte," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №21-2 (1908), p.30.
[113] S. Beldeninov, "Sud'ba 'Kramolnogo' Obschestva v Irkutske," *Sibirskie Voprosui* 3, №8 (1907), p.106.
[114] Chernov, "Kulturnaya Rabota v Irkutskte," p.30.

> a female institute, gymnasium, pro-gymnasium, female religious school, and an orphanage. For the males, gymnasia, a seminary with a school, a teaching seminary, a mining and technological school, two craft schools, a lower ranking cadet corps, a military medical school, a school near the hospital, two city schools and seven lower schools.[115]

However, whilst their claims of cultural primacy were true for East Siberia at that time, such an assertion would certainly have been challenged in Western Siberian cities such as Tomsk. Moreover, it was not until late 1913 that "a universal school network" was introduced in Irkutsk province.[116] In reality, across Siberia as a whole Great Russians often trailed far behind other ethnic groups in their literacy rates (roughly 16% for men and 4% for women), especially Protestants and Jews, who were three or even four times as likely to be literate.[117]

Indeed, as much as educated *Irkutyani* liked to stress their cultivation, it was accepted by so ardent a regionalist as P.M. Golovachev that there was a "chronic shortage in Siberia of not only the educated people, but simply competent people, and the strong need for them," which led to the campaign for the creation of a university in Irkutsk.[118] This shortfall was both hindered and (in theory) helped in 1905 when Siberian subjects were granted freedom of access to European Russian universities. Of the 8 700 students in St Petersburg in 1906, 242 (3%) were Siberian, with Irkutsk the greatest single contributor. Whilst he lamented the reluctance of Siberians to study in their homeland, the Irkutsk-born lawyer S.I. Beldeninov (1879-196?) welcomed the existence of a Siberian student body in St Petersburg. He depicted a group that

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[115] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, Ocherki Sibiri Dlya Narodnogo Chteniya 1 (Irkutsk, 1897), p.9.
[116] "Sem'ya I Shkoli," *Irkutskaya Gazeta*, №4 (November 11, 1913) p.2.
[117] I. Serebrennikov, "Gramotnost' v Sibiri Po Dannim Perepisi 1897 G (Okonchanie №17)," *Sibirskie Voprosui* 3, №18 (1907), pp.15-21.
[118] P. Golovachev, "Proektiruemui Obschestvennui Universitet v Irkutske," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №11 (1908) 12. Irkutsk would not get its university until 1918, founded by Bolshevik intellectuals en route to Vladivostok.

felt "it is hard to find intelligent amusement in St Petersburg" and he believed that "the predominant number of students intend, on completion of their university course, to return to Siberia and use their knowledge and abilities for the benefit and prosperity of the motherland."[119] However, in practice, it seemed that most of Siberia's leading lights - like Nikolai Yadrintsev, Nikolai Shchukin and Nikolai Polevoi - moved west without much intention of returning.[120] It is interesting to note that they were often referred to as 'student Siberians' (*studenti-sibiriakii*). Though an obvious designation, it seems that 'Siberian-ness' was seen as a fixed aspect of their identity, in the same way that other minorities such as Jews were given ethno-centric "compound identities".[121] In 1883 Yadrintsev described Siberian students at St Petersburg University, which he himself had been two decades previously, as "very gifted people distinguished with bold and direct character... Generally the student Siberians were of an independent (*nezavisimim*) and tenacious (*nastoichivim*) character." [122] This characterisation echoes the traditional image of the proud, bold Siberian peasant discussed in the next chapter. Their cultivated separateness was emphasised by the creation of a Siberian students' fraternity in St Petersburg.[123]

Another significant category of all-Russian organisations in Irkutsk was political parties. Irkutsk had a long history of housing political exiles, and the Socialist Revolutionaries and Social Democratic Party were clandestinely active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[124] Following the promulgation of the October Manifesto, Irkutsk also acquired its own legal branches of the metropolitan political parties. Although the "existing military situation" with

[119] S. Beldeninov, "Sibirskaya Molodezh v Peterburgskom Universitete," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №1 (1907) pp.52-59.
[120] Diment, "Exiled from Siberia", p.48.
[121] Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia*, Studies on the History of Society and Culture 45 (Berkeley, 2002), p.334, [Viewed: 19/11/2012] Available from http://site.ebrary.com/lib/uon/Doc?id=10054452. See Chapter 4 for more on the similar treatment of the Buriats.
[122] Yadrinstev, "Zhizn I Trudi A.P. Schapova (okonchanie)," p.8.
[123] Ibid.
[124] See Chapter 3 for more on the history of Irkutsk province's Socialist parties.

Japan around the time of the first two Dumas meant that "campaigning was of a very modest size due to administrative repression," deputies were elected and observers could even claim that "In the cities, stable political parties with specific programmes have already … established a contest between reactionary and progressive elements."[125] Accusations of rampant corruption aside, the deputies elected in the province seemed to be a mixture of "moderate centre-right" representatives and "progressives". A typical example of the former is "Mr Ya. Kadinov, a wealthy, even very wealthy peasant" returned for Cheremkhovo district under the altered franchise in 1907, who was said to be "in his convictions something like 'truly Russian'". Their opponents were represented by the likes of "Vygovskii, a former district clerk and veteran of the Manchurian campaign [who] is well aware of local needs, and a progressive man, and Michurin, the farmer-peasant (*zemledelets-krest'yan*) of Znamensk village ... who is engaged in petty trade and has a wine cellar. Michurin has fully-cultivated the interests of peasant-government in a progressive direction."[126]

The stymieing of the electoral process in Irkutsk was reflective of a wider issue that affected the cultural flow into and out of the province during this period. It would be inaccurate to give the impression that there was a teleological improvement of cultural networks, and that an increasingly large volume of information flowed unfettered into and out of Irkutsk province. First, postal censorship was alive and well. The tsarist authorities deployed operatives dedicated to perlustration to ensure that seditious or otherwise 'unsuitable' correspondence did not reach its intended recipients.[127] As a province of the Russian Empire, Irkutsk was governed by strict print censorship laws. This was overseen in the metropole by the Chief Censorship Office of the Central Office of Press Affairs, under the Ministry of the Interior, with their instructions being

[125] N., "Vibornaya Kampania v Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui*,. №2 (1907), p.120.
[126] Ibid. p.112
[127] For a fuller treatment of this matter, see David M. Skipton and Peter A. Michalove, *Postal Censorship in Imperial Russia* (Urbana, 1989).

carried out under the direction of the gubernatorial administration.[128] Pre-publication censorship was done away with in 1865, but Alexander III later prohibited publishing articles on certain topics. Even though press freedom was theoretically granted in the October Manifesto, the state readily and systematically undermined this right. Even though it was far from the metropole, Irkutsk did not escape the "unsleeping eye."[129] Indeed, in the 1900s, the Irkutsk-owned, St Petersburg-based journal *Sibirskie Voprosui* published a regular series called 'At the Dawn of the Siberian press', in which a writer known only as V.G. "working in the East Siberian central office" in Irkutsk, claimed to have "stumbled across papers related to the early days of the press... [which are] interesting to characterise the state of certain Siberian newspapers, and especially the conditions of censorship, in former times."[130]

As in the rest of the empire, the October Manifesto was greeted with general enthusiasm in Irkutsk. Though disrupted by revolution, the improvement of the province's physical networks, combined with the freedoms engendered by the temporary contraction of state power, led to "a general upswing of life ... carried by the Siberian railway [and]... the heavy yoke of the censors was weakened."[131] However, Irkutsk also experienced the same disappointments as the rest of the empire when the turmoil died down and the autocracy began to reassert police and regulatory authority. Pre-publication censorship was reinstated and devolved to local officials, who were accused of heavy-handed and arbitrary use of their powers. One contributor to *Sibirskie Voprosui* identified only as 'L.' claimed that these “satraps” (*satrapi*) had sought to create an "artificially engineered silence, an intentional thickening of the darkness all around the most important and pressing local issues."[132]

[128] V.G., “Na Zare Sibirskoi Pechati,” *Sibirskie Voprosui*, 3 (1906) №.6 p.99.
[129] Chernov, “Kulturnaya Rabota v Irkutskte,” p.31.
[130] V.G., “Na Zare Sibirskoy Pechati,” p.87.
[131] L., “Iz Khorniki Obschestvennoi Zhizni Sibiri,” p.89. See Chapter 3 for more on the impact of revolution on provincial communications.
[132] L., “Sibirskaya Pechat i Mestnie Satrapi,” *Sibirskie Voprosui* 3, №9 (1907), pp.2-3.

Besides newspaper censorship, Siberian bookshop owners had to open their deliveries in the presence of a gendarme, who checked the legality or otherwise of the contents. A contributor to *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, again identified only through a single initial, in this case 'N.', claimed that "due to the ignorance of local police officials ... the arbitrary designation of 'harmful books' has, of course, been widely applied."[133] This led booksellers to "reduce their already small-scale operations, and limit supplies to only the most necessary items at a time when the population of Siberia is waking from its intellectual sleep, on the eve of major internal changes, and are especially in need of inexpensive, useful books!"[134] S.I. Beldeninov made the daring, potentially self-incriminating assertion that such actions on the part of the state were achieving the exact opposite of what was intended:

> But has the administration eradicated 'sedition'? Far from it; the administration is too clumsy and slow-witted. The population sympathises with 'sedition', and its advance is imperceptible. This administration is revolutionising a solid, influential part of the local population - the entire local intelligentsia - which rightly accuses the administration of hating education and desiring to destroy all pockets of it in Siberia. Constantly witnessing examples of outrageous arbitrariness on the part of the administration, the local intelligentsia will quickly and inevitably become revolutionary not only in spirit, but also in form.[135]

It is unsurprising that the inhabitants of Irkutsk would be frustrated with how their cultural access was being regulated. 'L.' summed up the contradictions by describing the early twentieth century as "the unprecedented revival of the Siberian periodical press, but at the same time, an unprecedented defeat."[136] The period of reaction following the declaration of the Fundamental Laws on

[133] N., "Stesnenie Knigi v Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №12 (1908), p.23.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Beldeninov, "Sud'ba 'Kramolnogo' Obschestva v Irkutske," pp.110-11.
[136] L., "Iz Khorniki Obschestvennoi Zhizni Sibiri," p.88.

23rd April 1906 led to the desolation of Irkutsk's print media, as "the venerable, honourable *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* was suspended and replaced by *Sibirskim Obozreniem* which, in turn, experienced the same fate. In its stead, there was *Vostochnii Krai*. The editor of *Sibirskim Obozreniem* was sent into exile. The Irkutsk newspaper *Molodaya Sibir'* lasted just one day."[137]

Conclusion

Irkutsk grew from an isolated wooden fort to become the pre-eminent cultural site in late imperial East Siberia. There was significant cultural activity in the pre-Reform era, especially from exiled Decembrists. However, trade with China, the influx of gold money from the 1870s and the devastating fire at the end of that decade afforded Irkutsk's newly cash-rich merchants and prospectors the means and opportunity to construct their own high society. Like other imperial cities, technological advances improved Irkutsk's connection to the metropole in the era of New Imperialism. This increased contact did go some way to standardising cultural tastes and practices, such as in theatrical productions. However, the city's new rich were accused, as is often the case, of vulgarity. Their supposed coarseness did little to counteract the picture of Irkutsk as a rough and ready frontier town masquerading behind a veneer of bought civility. Local social, political, economic and cultural forces ensured that Irkutsk was not homogenised as a pale imitation of cities west of the Urals. Rather these factors refracted the input of metropolitan and international networks to create a unique milieu based on this internationalised 'western' and Russian inheritance.

[137] Ibid., p.91.

2

Old and New Siberian Peasants

> All of us who love the People (*narod*) look at them as if at a theory and, it seems, not one of us loves them as they really are but only as each of us imagines them to be. And…if the Russian people eventually were to turn out to be not as we imagined them, then we all, despite our love of them, would likely renounce them at once with no regrets.[1]

This chapter focuses on the largest section of the population of Irkutsk province in the late imperial period, the peasantry, and how they were imagined and re-imagined to reflect the shifting social, cultural and economic aspirations of the Irkutsk cultural class. Specifically, the focus will be on two groups. The first is the long-established peasant population, known as *starozhily* (veterans) or simply *Sibiriakii* (Siberians), who made up the vast majority of the provincial population in the late imperial period. Characterisations of these *starozhily* by the Irkutsk cultural class are key to understanding how the latter viewed Irkutsk province, its population and their situation within the wider Russian Empire. The second group is the *novosely* (newcomers), the name given to the migrant peasant population that arrived after 1861 mostly from European Russia, and their immediate descendants. Contemporary analytical categories of the social, cultural and economic life

[1] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *A Writer's Diary* (Evanston, 2009), p.129.

(*buit'*) of these peasants are analysed in the context of shifting strains of intellectual thought.[2]

Philosophies originating in western and central Europe like Liberalism and Romantic Nationalism, and developing human and biological sciences such as ethnography, Social Darwinism and material determinism were co-opted and synthesised as explanatory frameworks for these depictions. They reflected the ongoing debate surrounding the recently-emancipated peasantry which, utilising Cathy Frierson's notion of "peasant icons", crystallised around several key images. The first, "the peasant as the rational man of the land", was the most influential. It did not, as Frierson states, “displace the image of the *narod*" that had prevailed in the 1860s, but it was certainly influential. This image was joined by the complementary characterisations of the rich peasant exploiter (*kulak*) and the exploited "grey" peasant.[3] There is clear evidence of all of these images in the debate surrounding Siberian settlement. However, conceptions of the Irkutsk peasantry were not merely theoretical. They had genuine importance for the lives of both the established Old Siberian peasantry and the newcomers as an increasingly interventionist state sought the most effective, ‘rational’ means to continue the colonisation of Siberia. It was therefore vital for established peasant groups and new settlers to prove their worth to the metropolitan government as both agriculturists and civilisers. The growth of the human sciences, the penetration of capitalism into the Russian Empire and Great Power imperial rivalries in the Far East created a situation where older,

[2] Nathaniel Knight, “Science, Empire and Nationality: Ethnography in the Russian Geographical Society, 1845-1855,” in Nathaniel Knight, Jane Burbank and David L. Ransel (eds), *Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington, 1998), pp.108-42.

[3] Cathy A. Frierson, *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late Nineteenth Century Russia* (New York, 1993), p.77. In her characterisations of these various models, Frierson relies largely on two writers: Gleb Ivanovich Uspenskii and Aleksandr Nikolaevich Engelgardt. Uspenskii was a renowned Populist "writer turned amateur sociologist" from Tula, south of Moscow. Engelgardt was an "agronomist turned farmer" who in 1871 was accused of spreading democratic ideas and exiled to his private estate in Batishchevo, Smolensk Province. Between 1872 and 1887 he wrote a series of twelve articles called 'Letters from the Countryside' which detailed his experiences. Frierson stated that their influence was such that "these two men largely determined the discourse on the Russian peasant soul for nearly two decades."

romanticised notions of the heroic peasant pioneer became less important than the creation of a productive, reliable and manageable population. As such, an analysis of locally-produced characterisations shows how their respective advocates sought to prove the suitability of 'Old' and 'New' Siberians to this new competitive paradigm. From that comes an exploration of the various formulations drawn up to reshape peasant society to meet these new challenges. Their search for the *narod* was "Russia's literary ethnographers ... merely holding their own in the far-flung international hunt for nationally meaningful colonists and frontiers".[4] Nineteenth-century writers 'invented' a *narod* whose innate qualities were to be used as a means of justifying social transformation.[5] In the same way, images of the *narod*, emancipated peasants and natives (*inorodtsy*) were appropriated and adapted in this search for the Siberian peasant, exemplifying what Étienne Balibar has called “fictive ethnicity”, idealised representations of a people and their past that provide models for reformers to emulate.[6]

The 'resettlement question'

It seems that there was not a time in late imperial Irkutsk province when it could not be said that "The question about the future of Russian resettlement is increasingly attracting the attention of Russian society."[7] Certainly there was little sign of waning interest among the Irkutsk cultural class, especially with the relaxation of peasant resettlement laws from the mid-1880s and the announcement of the Trans-Siberian Railway. This can be seen as part of the

[4] Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca, 2006), p.162.
[5] Olga Maiorova, *From the Shadow of Empire : Defining the Russian Nation Through Cultural Mythology, 1855-1870*, trans. Derek Payton (Madison, Wisconsin, 2010), p.13 [viewed 21/11/2011] Available from http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10413373.
[6] Etienne Balibar, ‘Racism and Nationalism’, in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein (eds), *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London, 1991).
[7] “Sposobny-Li Sibiryaki k Sel’skokhozyaystvennomu Progressu i Obshchinnoy Zhizni? (Po Povodu Odnogo Dolkada)”, *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, May 19, 1891, №21, p.2.

wider Russian intelligentsia's relentless quest to discover the 'true' nature of the Russian peasantry, and therefore of Russia itself. Hayden White has stated that such fascination with 'wild' or 'primitive' peoples occurs "in times of socio-cultural stress, when the need for positive self-definition asserts itself, but no compelling criterion of self-identification appears," especially for educated elites that are "uncertain as to the precise quality of their sensed humanity."[8] This relates closely to Alexander Etkind's analysis of the *narod* as Russia's "orientalised peasantry", exoticised by an intelligentsia to whom they felt entirely, guiltily alien. In their search for understanding, educated Russians fell back on "comparison with the romantic savages of the Caucasus, Siberia and America … [who] evolved into the populist characters of the late nineteenth century" in the works of Tolstoy, Gorky and others.[9] As such, accounts of noble or intelligentsia interaction with peasants "often read like Victorian anthropologists encountering new and 'savage' cultures for the first time."[10]

In an era of increasing scientific rigour and specialisation, steady expansion of imperial possessions in the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Far East stimulated the scientific study of colonisation and peasant settlement. Although these emerging disciplines overlapped significantly, they were usually treated as distinct.[11] Increased Great Power competition for influence in China and Japan in the mid-nineteenth century also sharpened Russian minds. The tsarist state had been very successful in territorial terms, having extended its reach to the Pacific coast with the signing of the Peking Conventions in 1860. However, despite a steady flow of trade with China, Russia could not hope to compete with its European rivals in terms of naval power or economic clout, and there were fears over their rivals' designs on Manchuria and Korea in particular.

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[8] Hayden V. White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, 1978), pp.151-2.

[9] Alexander Etkind, "Orientalism Reversed: Russian Literature in the Times of Empires," *Modern Intellectual History* 4, №03 (2007), p.627, [viewed 04/10/2010] Available from doi:10.1017/S1479244307001448.

[10] Stephen P. Frank, "'Simple Folk, Savage Customs?' Youth, Sociability, and the Dynamics of Culture in Rural Russia, 1856-1914," *Journal of Social History* 25, №4 (July 1, 1992), p.711.

[11] For example, 'thick' journals usually listed 'peasant questions' and 'the resettlement issue' under different headings.

Instead, they adopted another well-established means of securing control over their Far Eastern possessions; agricultural colonisation.

The 'peasant question' was at the centre of the debate on the future of the Russian Empire. The 1897 census recorded that 86% of the imperial population was registered to the peasant estate. Peasants also made up 80% of the army in 1915, and contributed 80% of exports and taxation.[12] There were fewer than six hundred thousand Russian settlers in the whole of Siberia in 1800. As the late imperial period wore on, anxiety mounted in both official and private circles regarding the 'land hunger' engendered by the supposed overpopulation of the empire's European core. Although eastward peasant migration grew steadily following the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, the most significant increase came in the last two decades of the nineteenth century as resettlement restrictions were gradually eased and the Trans-Siberian Railway became operational. By the time the defeated Russians forfeited Port Arthur and Korea to Japan in the Treaty of Portsmouth in 1906, the "great resettlement movement" (*moguchee pereselencheskoe dvizhenie*) and natural increase had brought the Siberian population to 9.4million, of which 90% were of Russian origin, higher than in some European Russian provinces.[13] Moreover, over 80% of these ethnic Russians were registered to the peasant estate. So sweeping was this transformation that the Kadet economist Mikhail Nikolaevich Sobolev claimed that even more so than European Russia, twentieth century Siberia was a "peasant country" (*muzhitskoi stranui*).[14]

Of the approximately four million settlers who came to Siberia between 1896 and 1915, the vast majority settled in West Siberia, with Tobolsk and Tomsk

[12] Corinne Gaudin, *Ruling Peasants: Village and State in Late Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, 2007), pp.3-4.
[13] P. Serebrennikov, "Zaselennost Sibiri Russkimi," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №7 (1908), p.22. By way of comparison, the population of the empire as a whole rose from 36 million in 1796 to 126 million by the time of the 1897 census.
[14] M. Sobolev, "K Voprosu O Reforme Krest'yanskogo Upravleniya v Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №5 (1905): 86. *Muzhik* connoted a specifically Russian peasant.

provinces alone accounting for 60% of the Russian population in Siberia by 1905.[15] East Siberia experienced a much smaller, though still significant, influx. In that same period, only six hundred thousand migrants went to Irkutsk, Yenisei and Yakutsk provinces or Transbaikal Oblast.[16] Between 1894 and 1899, Irkutsk province attracted only 0.2% of Siberian migrants. This rose only slightly in the next five years to 2.5%, but peasants of Russian origin still accounted three quarters of the provincial population by 1905, up from two thirds in 1865.[17] It would seem therefore that Irkutsk's established population was only marginally affected by the waves of migrants crashing eastwards across the Urals. However, Irkutsk city was an administrative locus for the resettlement movement to the Amur and the Maritime Provinces, which meant that wandering peasants were a common sight. Even though the established, ethnically-Russian peasant population formed a comfortable majority in the province, the 'resettlement' question was fiercely debated in the Irkutsk press, and characterisations of settlement and settlers increasingly impinged on debates surrounding the *starozhily* population.

Competing ideologies

The growth of nationalism had a transformative effect on politics and culture in the nineteenth century for democracies and autocracies alike. Competing nationalisms were a challenge for the ruling class of all states, even putatively stable polities like Britain and France.[18] There were many variations, and a

[15] Serebrennikov, "Zaselennost Sibiri Russkimi," p.25.
[16] Anatole V. Baikalov, "Siberia since 1894," *The Slavonic and East European Review* №11, p.32 (January 1, 1933), pp.330-1. Another one million migrants passed through East Siberia on their way to the Russian Far East.
[17] K. Chudovskii, 'Istorino-Etnograficheskoi Ocherk Irkutskoi Guberny', *Zapiskii Sibirskogo otdel Imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obschestvo*, 1865, pp. 81. "Itogi Pereselencheskogo Dvizheniia," *Sibirskie Voprosui* 3, №7 (1907), p.25. By way of comparison, Yenisei province, with its significant amounts of crown lands, accounted for 10.2% and 17.3% of settlers in those five year periods.
[18] Madhavan K. Palat, 'Introduction', in Madhavan K. Palat (ed.), *Social Identities in Revolutionary Russia* (Houndmills, 2001), p.xiii.

detailed survey of nationalism is beyond the scope of this project.[19] In the Russian Empire, the 'Official Nationality' triad of Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality (*Pravoslavie, Samoderzhavie, Narodnost'*) was an attempt to divert nationalist sentiment away from populist conceptions of state legitimacy, though by mid-century "most of the members of the government-public nexus were now indeed nationalists of one variety or another."[20] The increasingly complicated search for Russian nationality in the late imperial period has been succinctly summed up by Olga Maiorova as

> a spectrum of competing constructs of the nation, ranging from the romantic and religious nationalism of Ivan Aksakov and Fedor Tiutchev to the state and secular nationalism of Mikhail Katkov; from the imperial Pan-Slavism of Mikhail Pogodin to the federalism articulated by Nikolai Kostomarov; from Stepan Gedeonov's chauvinistic justification for the empire's suppression of its non-Slavic population to Lev Tolstoy's ultimate denial of Russia's imperial mission.[21]

The growth of nationalist sentiment fed intellectual desires to 'discover', or rather 'rediscover' their own Russianness in the *narod*.[22] These themes of

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[19] For an overview of the genesis of Russian nationalism in the 1820s, see Vera Tolz, *Russia: Inventing the Nation* (London, 2001), p.1. For an alternative view, see Liah Greenfeld, "The Scythian Rome: Russia," in *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Boston, Mass., 1992); Maiorova, *From the Shadow of Empire*; Alexei Miller, *The Romanov Empire and Nationalism*, trans. Serguei Dobrynin, English Ed. Rev. and Enl. (Budapest, 2008); For a sample of wider reading on the subject of nationalism, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed (London, 2006); Serhiy Bilenky, *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations* (Stanford, 2012); Brian Jenkins, *Nationalism in France: Class and Nation Since 1789* (London, 1990); Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914* (DeKalb, 1996).

[20] Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, p.186.

[21] Maiorova, *From the Shadow of Empire*, pp.8-9. The third tenet of Uvarov's 'Official Nationalism' - narodnost' has many possible translations - "nationalism, nationality, nationhood, folkways, folksiness, folklorism, populism, popularity, accessibility, comprehensibility." Maureen Perrie, 'Narodnost': Notions of national identity', in Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd, (eds), *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1881-1940* (Oxford, 1998), p.28.

[22] Alexander Pushkin, *Dnevniki*, 55, with reference to Karamzin, *Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskogo*, in Maiorova, *From the Shadow of Empire*, p.193.

alienation and discovery were a driving force behind late imperial peasant studies, both scientific and literary. Authors like Dostoevsky "exhorted educated society to overcome its self-imposed alienation from the authentic values preserved in the common people."[23] Scientific endeavour also became more nationally oriented. This is demonstrated by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, where in the 1850s the 'Russian' faction's "national model" prevailed over the more internationalist approach of their 'German' rivals to ensure that the society's main focus was the "geography of the homeland". [24] However, Russian intellectuals did not turn away from international discourse; this nationalisation of science was a "pan-European trend" precipitated by the emergence of the "(nation-) state as a structuring unit, a funding agent, and the principle arena of scientific study."[25]

With the theme of the nation so prevalent in public discourse and government policy, "the national meanings and functions of colonisation came to be stressed to an unprecedented degree."[26] Miroslav Hroch has described the growth of Romantic-influenced nationalism as "the cult of language, the idealisation of the past, and the cult of the common people", elements which are conspicuous across a wide geographical and chronological range of national manifestations.[27] Two competing concepts of the Russian 'nation' emerged. The first was based on dynastic legitimacy and Uvarov's 'Official Nationality', with 'Russian' (*rossiiskii*), pertaining to all imperial subjects regardless of origin. The second was the concept of 'Russian' (*russkii*) as an exclusive generic category denoting all who were perceived as ethnically 'Russian' - Great Russians (*velikorussie*), Little Russians (*malorusskie*), now known as Ukrainians, and White Russians, i.e. Byelorussians. [28] This

[23] Ibid., p.190.
[24] Knight, "Science, Empire and Nationality", p.112.
[25] Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient:The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford, 2011), p.7.
[26] Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, p.186.
[27] Miroslav Hroch, "National Romanticism," in *National Romanticism: Formation of National Movements* (Herndon, Virginia, 2006), p.6.
[28] Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis, 'All the Russias... '?', in Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis (eds), *National Identity in Russian Culture: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 2006), p.5.

identification was heavily influenced by the ethno-centric *Volksturm* movement in the German states and underpinned by a shared Orthodox faith.[29] However, although they were portrayed as ideologically distinct, "these two words, and hence the two concepts of Russianness they implied, overlapped and could even be used interchangeably in many contexts."[30]

Cathy Frierson has demonstrated that the 1870s saw the increased influence of two strains of intellectual thought as explanatory factors in peasant relations; economic determinism and Social Darwinism.[31] With regard to the former, the growth of capitalist interpretations of worth, a more starkly hard-edged and profit-driven approach, was a defining characteristic of the long nineteenth century. This was underpinned by the growing influence of bourgeois values such as individualism, self-discipline, self-made wealth as the measure of success, poverty as the reasonable consequence of failure, faith in the invisible hand of the free market as providing for common good, and adherence to the creeds of rationalism, science and technology as markers of human progress. The apostles of this movement were men such as John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham and Adam Smith.[32] These influences led some practitioners of peasant studies to try to accommodate notions of outside agency with existing beliefs in peasant innatism.

The rise of economic determinism was based on the increased collection, analysis and deployment of statistics by myriad government ministries, local councils and learned societies. In this sense, it was an offshoot of the "cult of objectivity" which came to dominate Victorian philosophical debate.[33] The

[29] For a useful survey of "the nation" see Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson (eds), *What Is a Nation? Europe 1789-1914* (Oxford, 2006). For a specifically Russian-centred approach to the interconnections between nationalisms, see Miller, *The Romanov Empire and Nationalism*.
[30] Maiorova, *From the Shadow of Empire*, p.5.
[31] Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, p.138.
[32] John L. Comaroff, "Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience. Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa," in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds) *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, 1997), p.169.
[33] For an overview of historical objectivism, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, 1988).

nineteenth century saw a steady increase of statistical analyses of both domestic and imperial domains as governments sought to harness new scientific and sociological disciplines to obtain greater knowledge of, and so control over, the areas they governed. Michel Foucault described this trend towards systematising state knowledge as part of the wider bureaucratisation of European governments which began in the eighteenth century. He coined the term "biopower" to refer to "the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power".[34] One statistical resource that came to symbolise the fusion of state power, information and the scientific classification of humanity was the census. The first recognisably modern national census in Britain took place in 1801, followed by France in 1836 and Belgium ten years later.[35]

The pursuit of this valuable information was not limited to the metropole. Indeed, the paucity of native rights ensured that there were often "far more extended and potentially unpopular censuses in the colonies than at home."[36] The applicability of Foucauldian theories to the Russian Empire has been debated, but they have been increasingly utilised in recent years as interpretations of imperial state and society have altered.[37] For example, Steven Seegel has described the increased use of census-taking and record-keeping by the imperial government in the western borderlands as "part of the

[34] 11th January 1978, in Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78* (Basingstoke, 2007), p.1.
[35] Rolf Gehrmann, "German Census-Taking Before 1871," in *Max Planck-Institut Für Demografische Forschung* (Rostok, Germany, 2009), p.5 [viewed 15/06/2014] Available from: http://www.demogr.mpg.de/papers/working/wp-2010-030.pdf.
[36] Kathrin Levitan, *A Cultural History of the British Census: Envisioning the Multitude in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2011), p.150. This information was often compiled in summary volumes such as Charles Anthony Coke, *Census of the British Empire: Compiled from Official Returns for 1861* (London, 1864).
[37] Laura Engelstein is one of the most prominent critics of the use of Faucaultdian theory in imperial Russia. See Laura Engelstein, "Combined Underdevelopment: Discipline and the Law in Imperial and Soviet Russia," *The American Historical Review* 98, №2 (April 1993), p.338 [viewed 15/11/2012] Available from: doi:10.2307/2166836. For a recent study which more actively engages with Foucault, see Etkind, *Internal Colonisation*.

state's governamentality, feeding data to the metropole".[38] Such actions were reflective of a pan-European, pan-imperial trend. The first comprehensive census of St Petersburg was not undertaken until 1869. The first empire-wide census was not until 1897, although there had been less-detailed provincial surveys carried out in previous decades by both the state and learned societies like the Free Economic Society and the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (IRGS). For its part, the East Siberian branch of the IRGS stated that although population statistics for Irkutsk existed from the seventeenth century, anything collected before the nineteenth century was "extremely sketchy, erroneous and contradictory ".[39] Data was also collected on many other topics deemed vital to the interests of states and science, such as economic production, public health and topography. This new era of statistical analysis "undercut any romantic image of rustic vigour and strength" ascribed to the peasantry by greatly diminishing the ambiguities which had allowed such notions to thrive.[40] Instead, statistics gathered by local councils, learned societies, political activists and philanthropic organisations increasingly depicted squalid villages racked by poverty, famine, disease and ignorance.

Added to that, many Russian interpretations of Social Darwinism in an increasingly capitalist imperial economy created images of a society organised on the basis of competition and exploitation. This was true of not just the anti-European Populists and neo-Slavophiles, but also many liberals and socialists. Worried observers felt that the supposedly naive communalism of the *narod* would be inadequate to resist capitalist exploitation, and would require the protection of a revived serfdom-era paternal guardianship (*opeka*) under the auspices of educated society. Herbert Spencer's 'survival of the fittest' was seen to be playing out inside the village, with the meek peasant now cast as an 'unfit' participant in danger of extinction. Evolutionism had a complicated history in the Russian Empire due to the degree of interbreeding with native

[38] Steven Seegel, *Mapping Europe's Borderlands: Russian Cartography in the Age of Empire* (London, 2012), p.133.
[39] Chudovskii, "Istorino-Etnograficheskoi Ocherk Irkutskoi Guberny," p.78.
[40] Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, p.126.

peoples and the poverty of the peasants in relation to those they were supposed to 'civilise'.[41] However, Darwin's work was widely read in Russia, and he was admitted to the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences in 1867 as the 'new men' who had been his champions assumed greater importance. Moreover, other seminal evolutionists like Herbert Spencer, Edward B. Taylor and Henry Maine were well-known.[42]

In spite of this, the role of Social Darwinism in Russian ethnography is often seen as extremely limited. Robert P. Geraci and Yuri Slezkine have both stated that the vast majority of nineteenth century historians and ethnographers had little interest in it, and that complete biological assimilation of subject peoples was a non-issue compared to cultural Russification, which usually meant conversion to Orthodoxy and the attendant lifestyle changes.[43] Daniel Beer's view is somewhat more nuanced. He has stated that Russia fell in with the rest of Europe in pursuing a "biomedical understanding of national decline and individual deviance" in the late nineteenth century, and cites the popularity of Max Nordov's *Entartung* (1892), and the influence of these doctrines on the work of Chekhov and Tolstoy as proof.[44] However, Beer also conceded that such notions of racial "healthification" (*ozdorovlenie*) were vague and lacked any practical aspect.[45] In all, Russian peasant anthropology was a maelstrom of neo-Lamarckian acquired heredity and Mendelian genetics, joined in the latter part of the century by increasingly-prevalent Social Darwinist ideas.[46]

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[41] Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, 2001), p.221.
[42] Louise McReynolds, Cathy Popkin, and Steve Smith, “The Objective Eye and the Common Good” in Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (eds), *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1880-1940* (Oxford, 1998), p.83.
[43] Geraci, *Window on the East*, pp.173-4; Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca, 1994), p.121. See Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of attempts to Russify the Irkutsk Buriats.
[44] Daniel Beer, *Renovating Russia: The Human Sciences and the Fate of Liberal Modernity, 1880-1930* (Ithaca, 2008), p.13.
[45] Ibid, p.8.
[46] Nathaniel Knight, "Science, Empire and Nationality”, p.131.

The contradictory combination of innatism and outside agency showed that Russian observers were not willing to completely write off the peasantry.[47] Having invested so much in the notion of the *narod* as the repository of Russianness, and given their demographic dominance, this reluctance is understandable. That kind of surety was easier in relation to places in which they had no stake. For example, an 1883 article from *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* stated that "It has long been recognised that the economic and social structure of a people depends on the climatic and geographic conditions prevailing in the country. Nowhere is this truth so clearly displayed as in Australia... Overall, Australia promises little in the future." [48] This union of geography and Darwinism has been described by the cultural geographer Jon Anderson as the "environmental possibilist" approach.[49] Such notions were influential across Europe, most notably in the enduring impact of the French geographer Paul Vidal de la Blanche (1845-1919), whose theory of *genres de vie* (literally, 'ways of life') sought to incorporate geographical, social and economic influences and restore human agency.[50]

A 'Siberian' peasant 'type'

The Siberian regionalists were split on how and where the *Sibiriakii* fitted into the grand national narratives of Russian history and *narod* as nation.[51] Indeed a key tenet of regionalist thought was the existence of a unique Russian Siberian 'type' beyond the *narod*. Nikolai Mikhailovich Yadrintsev, perhaps the most influential regionalist of the late imperial period, came out strongly in favour of exactly that characterisation in his widely-lauded *Siberia as a Colony*

[47] Frierson, p.158.
[48] V. I_v, "Vopros O Ssil'nikh v Avstraly," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, December 8, 1883, №49, p.8.
[49] Jon Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces* (London, 2010), p.18.
[50] Tim Cresswell, *Geographic Thought: A Critical Introduction* (Chichester, 2012),p.62.
[51] Stephen Watrous, "The Regionalist Conception of Siberia, 1860-1920", in Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine (eds), *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture* (New York, 1993), p.114.

(1882).[52] He argued that due to the relative freedom they enjoyed, over time in Siberia there developed an industrious, independent people easily distinguished from their Russian peasant antecedents and contemporaries. It followed, he claimed, that increased contact with the metropole over the nineteenth century had perpetuated the region's colonial status and hindered the development of this uniquely gifted population. Alan Wood has dismissed this theory as a hodgepodge of "hereditary determinants such as the historical miscegenation of the incoming European Slavs with the autochthonous Siberian peoples, together with the environmental factors of climate, diet and natural conditions".[53] However, Yadrintsev was widely respected and his views were taken seriously by many practitioners of the human sciences.

That being said, not all of the Irkutsk regionalists were convinced of the existence of a unique *Sibiriak* genus. These writers were also given space in *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* and other Irkutsk publications. A contributor identified only as 'S.V.' put forward one such view in August 1883. S.V. proposed a comparative, all-Russian analysis of the *starozhily* utilising methods that had been "initially used to study original material in the north of Russia which [had been] extracted through local scientific research."[54] Although S.V. did not give any specifics, the results of this approach would apparently demonstrate that between European Russians and Russian Siberians, "there is not the slightest difference in the genus of the rural inhabitants, nor in the language, nor in the structure of their lives, either in manner or customs... [All] Russian agricultural territory is a continuation of Russia in an ethnographic respect, an inseparable part of the same organism."[55] This taxonomic, proto-racialist uniformity was apparently reinforced by environmental factors, namely the "homogenous conditions of Russia and Siberia" from "the middle of the country from the

[52] N.M. Yadrintsev, *Sibir' Kak Koloniya* (St Petersburg, 1882). Yadrintsev spent nine years in jail and exile for his promotion of the regionalist agenda, which was deemed inflammatory by the state.
[53] Alan Wood, *Russia's Frozen Frontier: A History of Siberia and the Russian Far East 1581 - 1991* (London, 2011), p.90.
[54] S.V., "Puti Dlya Reshenia Voprosov O Sibirskom Krestianstve," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, August 11, 1883, №32, p.9.
[55] Ibid.,p.8.

Urals to the boundary of Irkutsk province."[56] If anything, S.V. argued, the abundance of primeval forest in Siberia, as formerly existed in the Russian heartland, "could serve to strengthen the morals, customs and beliefs of the Russian peasant, accreted (*srosshikhsia*) within him from time immemorial in that age when the Russian people settled in the north and east of present-day Russia, [which was] forged from the primeval forests."[57] As such, this picture of uniformity of Russian and Siberian peasants was underpinned by a characteristic admixture of taxonomy and environmental determinism dressed up in faux-scientific language.

There were also more benign manifestations of this idea. One such example came from the moderate regionalist Vsevolod Ivanovich Vagin, the Irkutsk-born proprietor of the newspaper *Sibir'* and also a keen historian and member of the East Siberian Branch of the IRGS. An 1887 article in his newspaper dedicated to "the good works of all, irrespective of the birthright of their father-in-law, who served in Siberia honestly and beneficially" claimed that "like us, Mr Vagin does not distinguish between Siberian natives and newcomers. For him there are only more *Sibiriakii.*"[58] Vagin also studied Siberia in an international comparative context and transferred his characterisation to the relationship between Australia and England. He stated that the antipodean colony had "many features in common with England, particularly in relation to its social and economic makeup... its inhabitants, by their way of life, habits and traditions, are essentially the same as the English, just transferred to another land, and in this respect they are very different from the Americans."[59] However, notions of similarity were not always positive. For example, an 1885 editorial in *Sibir'* was at a loss to understand how even though the region's peasants had been spared "the chains", i.e. serfdom, they were still afflicted with the same problems as the emancipated European Russian peasantry,

[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., p.9.
[58] "Skazanie: O Dobrikh Lyudikh v Sibiri (iz Lichnilk Vospominany)," *Sibir'*, April 5, 1887, №14-15, p.22.
[59] V. I_v, 'Vopros O Ssil'nikh v Avstraly', *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, 8 December 1883, №,49 p.8.

particularly "familial fragmentation and the ... weakening of patriarchal authority."[60]

Nevertheless, such views represented a minority of regionalist opinion in Irkutsk. For the most part, *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* "played the role of a real mouthpiece" for Siberian regionalism, centred on Irkutsk.[61] Unsurprisingly, it and other Irkutsk outlets printed many articles which echoed Yadrintsev's positive concept of a unique Siberian genus. One such advocate was Dmitrii Irinarkhovich Zavalishin, a naval officer, writer and Decembrist exile originally from Astrakhan in the empire's far south-west.[62] Zavalishin's argument was based on a neo-Lamarckian idea of environmental determinism rather than innate superiority. In 1883 he wrote that "Evidently from the very beginning there existed in Siberia, as a colony, the best conditions for the development of the country and the welfare of the population. The mere fact that serfdom did not exist gave here was, it would seem, an important advantage."[63] Denunciations of serfdom had a long history in both European Russia and Siberia, as did the idea that its absence from Siberia had moulded a radically different peasantry. The same idea was put forward almost twenty years later by M.N. Sobolev, calling for increased local autonomy in the same manner as Yadrintsev:

> Siberia did not know the severe epoch of serfdom of peasants under landlords, and this, of course, is reflected in the character of the Siberian farmer (*sibirskogo zemledel'tsa*). He is more

[60] "Eshe Pechalnoi Yavlenie Krestyanskoi Zhizni," *Sibir'*, October 6, 1885, №41, p.3. There were in fact about 3 700 serfs in Siberia in 1861, shared among some thirty noble estates which were almost all in West Siberia. Janet M. Hartley, *Siberia: A History of the People* (London, 2014), p.169.

[61] Igor V. Naumov, *The History of Siberia* (Oxon, 2006), p.145.

[62] Zavalishin was known as "the last Decembrist", having outlived all of his fellows. He also had the unique distinction of having been forcibly exiled back to European Russia in 1863 on the express orders of Governor General Murav'ev, who feared that he was too dangerous to leave in Transbaikalia; V.D'. III, 217-405, *State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF)*, f.109, exp. 1 (1826), d. 61, ch. 43, [viewed 08/05/2014] quoted on http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enc_biography/133797/Zavalishin

[63] D. Zavalishin, "Kolony, Kak Stupen' v Razvity Chelovechestva (Okonchanie)," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, June 30, 1883, №26, p.9.

> independent and differs in the great development of a sense of personal dignity; he has avoided the oppression and humiliation so common in the Great Russian provinces. This also helped develop the greater independence and character of the economic activity of the *Sibiriak*, which demanded enterprise, initiative and the struggle for life in new, unknown conditions, etc.[64]

Sobolev provides a useful breakdown of the putative elements of Siberian peasanthood. Just like the European Russian peasant, the *Sibiriak* was analysed in terms of his personality, cultural activity, economic output and ability as a coloniser.[65] The skillsets of the reliable, productive peasant and pioneering frontiersman were not necessarily congruous, yet the Russian *muzhik* was required to fulfil both roles, often simultaneously. Willard Sunderland has shown how pragmatic transformations of conceptions of planter populations were a common feature of imperial dialogue in this period. For example, the growing prosperity of Australia transformed it from the "land of convicts and kangaroos" to the "land of the emigrant", and the previously savage, outlaw image of the Argentinean gaucho was remodelled as a symbol of the struggle for national independence.[66]

The myth of the *starozhily*

Even though serfdom had been abolished in 1861, its legacy endured. The peasant remained lodged at the bottom of the empire's system of estates (*sosolvie*), and old prejudices were slow to fade in official and intellectual circles. Although Siberia had largely avoided serfdom, many observers, especially advocates of a unique *Homo Sibiricus*, felt that its poisonous cultural legacy had been unfairly superimposed on the region and its inhabitants. As

[64] Sobolev, "K Voprosu O Reforme," p.88.
[65] Female peasants were discussed as a separate integer. See Chapter 4 for the role of peasant women in Irkutsk society.
[66] Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, p.161.

mentioned in the previous chapter, the Irkutsk press had appointed themselves the task of correcting what they perceived as the region's offensively inaccurate image in metropolitan circles. An 1883 editorial in *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* entitled 'The Causes of Prejudice towards Siberia' claimed that

> There is a certain magnification of misconceptions due to the fact that the main bulk of judgements of travellers' and explorers' hypotheses emerged from ideas of the peasant that were formulated during [the era of] serfdom. These were all certainly prejudiced against the *muzhik*: The educated Russian man took in with his mother's milk ... the well-known conjecture about the bestiality of the Russian peasant, and all the conditions of his life and upbringing support this hypothesis.[67]

More than that, there was a belief that such anachronistic views impinged on the resettlement question. In an 1877 editorial entitled 'Colonisation and its Significance', the editors of *Sibir'*, who dedicated significant column inches to peasant questions, expressed their frustration that

> The illumination of the issue of the resettlement of the people is hindered by the weight of prejudice and historical tradition generated by serfdom and all the baggage of Russian life. This tradition was demolished by the liberation of the peasants but it has not completely disappeared; it remains in the form of an exaggerated fear over these relocations.[68]

Therefore, the majority of the Irkutsk cultural class rejected the characterisation of a Siberian peasantry that was fully integrated into the prevailing narrative of the Russian *narod*. As such, they had to produce an alternative history and anthropology for their *Sibiriakii*. Olga Maiorova has

[67] "Prichini Predubezhdenuy k Sibiri," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, February 17, 1883, p.3.
[68] "Kolonizatsiya I Ee Znachenie," *Sibir'*, October 16, 1877, №42, p.1.

stressed the importance of mythmaking to late imperial intellectuals as it allowed them "to rhetorically link the perception of the people's uniqueness with hopes for, or fears of, the modernizing impetus of the reforms - and thus to absorb innovations while maintaining a sense of national continuity."[69] The absence of serfdom from Siberian history was a core component of the regionalists' romanticised mythmaking and characterisations of the Siberian peasant. The longevity of these ideas is evident in a lengthy exposition from *Sibirskie Voprosui* by 'Dim. Golovachev', perhaps a relative of the journal's proprietor, or a pseudonym of P.M. Golovachev himself. Printed in 1905, the most frequently recurring trope is of non-conformity and freedom. Although Golovachev's original peasant settlers were "*pashennie liudi*", a term referring to a kind of feudal dependent in medieval Muscovy, he recounted how they had allied with the tsar himself, the Little Father, to thwart noble attempts to enserf Siberia's nascent Russian population.[70] Moreover, he pointed out that "the attempt to export serfs from European Russia was also useless because they could run off in any direction at any time, especially as they were fleeing from European Russia to the free land of Siberia."[71] Golovachev also portrayed this embryonic community as socially heterogeneous. Besides dependant and fleeing peasants, he also recounted "Manumissioned retainers of every walk of life, and thieving folk" (*vol'naya druzhniki vsyakogo gulyashchego i vorovskogo lyuda*) among their number.[72] The implication was that in making a conscious choice to break the law and flee into the wilderness rather than live as slaves, these "fugitive people"(*begluie lyudi*) had displayed a bravery and boldness that were not present in traditional depictions of the *narod*. It was widely believed that from that point onwards, different historical and racial influences on the Russian-Siberian peasantry had instilled or reinforced in them a temperament unique among Russian peasants. As an outsider, the British arms manufacturer and traveller William Oliver Greener described what

[69] Maiorova, *From the Shadow of Empire*, p.11.
[70] Dim. Golovachev, "Chastnoe Zemlevladeniye v Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №7 (1905), p.126.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., p.124.

he perceived to be "the official Russian view of the Siberiaks [sic.]" he encountered in his discussions with local figures as follows:

> they are energetic and enterprising, capable of standing up for themselves and of struggling against misfortune; in character restless, and dissatisfied; neither fit nor willing to submit to the existing order of things as established by law, impatient of all interference and opposed to legal forms and the imposition of authority by administrators. They differ from the earlier settlers, the pioneers of Siberian colonisation, in being more peaceful, and better content with homely comforts, also lacking the warlike spirit of their ancestors.[73]

Greener's remarks highlight a key issue for those officials and observers who placed their faith in the Siberian peasant as a Russifying element. To be a pioneer (*pioner*) and a colonist (*kolonist*), he had to be possessed of a "warlike spirit", which in the past would have led him to flee the yoke of serfdom. However, the then-current generation of Siberians, who after all owed their supposed uniqueness to their forebears' actions, were required to be productive agriculturalists "content with homely comforts." The need to marry these competing roles fostered contradictory images, much like depictions of the *narod* as a whole. The increasing professionalisation and interconnection of human and biological science dispelled some of the myths upon which such Romantic characterisations relied, but could not completely eradicate them. Cathy Frierson has shown how this caused a split in depictions of the *narod*, as central government, zemstvos and scientific organisations produced studies based on statistics and surveys, whilst an increasingly disaffected section of the intelligentsia consciously retreated into didacticism and moralism.[74] The latter approach comes through in much of the poetry that was published during this period. Twenty years before Golovachev's paean to the bold

[73] William Oliver Greener, *Greater Russia: The Continental Empire of the Old World* (London, 1903), pp.104-5.
[74] Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, p.190.

Siberian pioneers, *Sibir'* printed the work of a local poet named S.S. Popov which celebrated the bravery and diversity of these warriors, peasants, schismatics and fugitives a similar way:

From the free Volga host
They came to Siberia, to this free region,
Our daring ancestors.
... Tillers of the soil are not homeless people
Our ancestors were industrious.
...
From the squire, reader
To the bailiff, to the burglar
Our ancestors are serfs.

They escaped to distant Siberia,
Settled the deep taiga
Or came here as tramps.

Found guilty
And wrongly convicted.
Our ancestors walked to penal servitude (*katorga*)

They went to settle in Siberia
And behind them, dwindling,
Went their wives and children.

By the rites of the Church
Like thieving criminals
Our ancestors were judged.

A strong, powerful people
Walked into the primeval woods.

From its native land to the Siberian region.

That is who settled the whole of Siberia,
Russified it, opened it
That is who these forefathers were."[75]

This language was echoed by 'Omulevskii', the penname of the poet Innokentii Vasilevich Fedorov (1836-1883). A native of Kamchatka, Omulevskii was educated in Irkutsk after his bureaucrat father was posted there. Like many of his fellows, he then moved to St Petersburg, where he studied Law. His poetry had a distinct theme of proud regionalism, with titles such as 'Siberian Lullaby (to my son)', 'To the New Year (a Siberian toast)', and 'Sibiriak' appearing in *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*. It also bears many influences characteristic of the time. There is the traditional, contradictory image of the pure yet cunning *narod*, as well as the clear superiority of the bold, courageous and intelligent Siberian pioneer and a fierce defensiveness of his homeland:

Courage, resourcefulness, habit,
To scour the country
Pureness of mind, towards
A new era.

Pride, soundness of mind,
Humour, a thirst for rights
A genial slyness,
A merry disposition.

Political diplomat
In his speech with an outsider,
Frankness, the freedom of a brother

[75] S.S. Popov., "Sibirskie Starozhily," *Sibir'*, November 3, 1885, №45, p.7.

With his countryman.

An inveterate passion for nature
From the steppes to the mountains
Soul, striving for freedom,
Loves open spaces.

A quest for work, a thirst for light,
Young life of blood
Without limit, and a covenant
To love the homeland.

A passion to defend his homeland,
To know; yes, that, how?
Resistance, a heart of gold-
There is our *Sibiriak*![76]

The image of the brave and resourceful Siberian peasant also found its way into more measured analysis. Again straddling the seemingly incongruous positions of innatism and environmental determinism, Dmitrii Zavalishin's focus on youth and passion is reminiscent of the Victorian-era image of the colonial subject as "noble savage-peasant child".[77] He stated that "With greater freedom of movement, with the vastness of the space open to human activities... it can be said that an unusual spirit of enterprise and courage developed among the Siberian settlers."[78] This, he claimed, transformed "[s]imple industrialists, farmers and tradesmen" into pioneers who had "developed navigation on the most dangerous seas of the globe, and such

[76] Omulevskii, "Sibiriak," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, August 18, 1883, №33, p.11.
[77] Christopher John Murray (ed.), "The Noble Savage," in *Encyclopaedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850* (New York, 2004), p.811.
[78] Zavalishin, "Kolony, Kak Stupen' v Razvitii Chelovechestva (Okonchanie)," p.9.

ocean crossings founded the Russian possessions in America." [79] However, Zavalishin believed that these achievements had been overlooked, which led to people having "accused the Russians of still being stagnant and lacking in enterprise due to their surroundings, not due to the nature of the Russian person."[80]

One of the most influential characterisations of the Siberian peasant came from the exiled regionalist writer and Irkutsk native Afanasii Prokof'evich Shchapov. His work on the Siberian peasants of the Kudinsk-Lena region bridged the Romantic imagery of the *narod* that prevailed in the 1860s and the more analytical, less hopeful literature of the 1870s. Published by the Siberian branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, Shchapov's work on the Siberian peasant 'type' helped to lay the foundations for Yadrintsev's exposition of *Homo Sibiricus* in *Siberia as a Colony* a few years later. Yet Shchapov's *Sibiriak* was not only a noble frontiersman like that of Zavalishin or Omulevskii. Instead, Shchapov grounded his idea of uniqueness in the *Sibiriak* as a 'true' Russian peasant, not yet touched by the corrupting power of capitalism. Veneration of *starozhily* elders was a constant theme in Shchapov's analysis. He depicted them as the quasi-mystical repository of a supposed innate *Sibiriak* morality that was allegedly was under threat from a new generation in thrall to commercialism and losing its Siberian identity. Typical of this theory are his description of meeting in Anginsk settlement an "elder, a very respectable man, thoughtful and teetotal", and a "venerable, prosperous, highly industrious old man" from a *starozhily* settlement on the Minor Ange tributary of the Lena. Whilst his peasant characterisations share the pride and industry of the Irkutsk poets' depictions, the gravity of Shchapov's *Sibiriak* comes across in a manner befitting a religious teacher. He recalled a conversation between two greybeard elders in such a manner:

[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.

> Our science is our fields, our work…What is done in other places, in distant foreign lands, anywhere God is, should be according to God's truth, according to the Scriptures.
>
> We dark people (*temnie lyudi*) understand all of this in our own way, and do not 'know' like the smart people... We see God's wisdom, and wishing to know, we pray to God, and know. 'Grandfather, your deceased father, Prokofiev Andreeich, used to, God grant him the Kingdom of Heaven, he always spoke in Scriptures, a gift from our old peasant clan to the landholder and the ploughman like us. Now he is gone.'[81]

Shchapov's *starozhily* were not the vanguard of change, but an endangered relic of a lost Eden. This was a variation of wider late imperial ethnography, which reflected the belief that in their 'natural' state the *narod* were a wellspring of 'authentic' Russian values - unspoilt, untouched, undeveloped and full of contradictions: "Innocent, ignorant yet cunning, conservative, steeped in pagan superstitions, and prone to periodic outbursts of bestial violence."[82] It was to be where the practitioners of the 'national model' discovered their 'nation'. However, Russian peasant tradition was an almost entirely oral one and peasant culture in European Russia was believed to be undergoing a process of irreversible diminution under the pervasive influences of modern government and capitalist market forces.[83] Consequently, the 1890s saw a flurry of expeditions organised by the Ethnographic Office of the IRGS to go among the peasants and "folklorise" this rapidly vanishing cultural inheritance for posterity.[84]

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[81] A.P. Shchapov, "*Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaya Obschina* v Kudinsko-Lenskom Krae," *Izvestia Sibirskogo Otdel Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obschestvo* VI, №3 (July 1875), p.111.
[82] Frank, "Simple Folk, Savage Customs?," p.711.
[83] Ibid.
[84] A.V. Buganov, "Historical Views of the Russian Peasantry: National Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century", in Madhavan K. Palat (ed.) *Social Identities in Revolutionary Russia*, (Basingstoke, 2001), pp.65-7.

The belief of Shchapov and others that the eastern isolation of the *starozhily* had preserved an even more 'pure' Russian culture was a logical extension of this view. It was an opinion shared by Valentin Fyodorovich Bulgakov (1886-1966), the Tomsk-educated secretary of Leo Tolstoy and a respected figure in the field of peasant studies. Bulgakov lamented the fact that industrialisation in European Russia had "reduced the number of simple, naive 'storytellers' (*skaziteli*) and singers from among the people."[85] He claimed that by comparison in "still wild and uncultured Siberia... Scattered over this vast area of forests, swamps and mountains, the peasant population ... has therefore altered much less from the original way of life. It seems to have been the same for decades, if not centuries."[86] This isolation had "preserved the ancient, archaic forms of Russian folk epics intact, as well as the works of individual peoples" which had "disappeared in Russia, despite the fact that they were native to there!"[87] Interestingly, Bulgakov also stated "in fairytales and songs recorded in Siberia, there is always a *Siberian element*" such as a change of location or clothing from the original.[88]

However, where Shchapov had perceived the preservation of 'Siberian' values as wholly positive, thirty years later Bulgakov saw stagnation and backwardness. Although he worked to ensure that Russia's peasants did not "take their [cultural] wealth to their grave", Bulgakov was positively inclined towards 'Western' narratives of social progress, stating that "Cultural evolution quickly carries away every people from the old, archaic forms of social life to new, previously unknown and, of course, much more perfects forms."[89] He ultimately framed this not as preservation, but as the "relative stagnation" (*sravnitel'noi kosnosti*) of the Siberian peasantry compared to the European Russian settlers, and in turn "because the social and cultural life of Russia was generally more advanced than Siberian life, they [too] began to

[85] Val. Bulgakov, "Zhivaya Starina v Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №1 (1907) p.70.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid., p.69.

stagnate."[90] A locally produced Irkutsk guidebook from 1897 reinforced this idea of cultural stagnation in isolation, manifested in the trampling of their innate peasant lyricism:

> The *Sibiriakii* are not a poetic people. Possibly in their struggle with nature and other people some were not up to singing, but certainly by nature they are serious, secretive and somewhat sullen... Previously they enjoyed singing songs when returning from the meadows or farmland; now it does not happen.[91]

In spite of improved communication routes and increased resettlement, there were certainly many peasant villages in Irkutsk province that existed in extreme isolation. Vorobev, a forty-five dwelling settlement in Karagansk district, some 1 500 versts north of Irkutsk, was one such village. It was the district's most significant settlement, and was used to house those exiles the state deemed particularly troublesome. Whilst recognising their constant struggle to eke out even a meagre existence, the exiles also complained of the *starozhily*'s complete indifference towards cultural activity: "There is no postal service... There is no library. The local inhabitants have no spiritual needs. They live an entirely primitive, animal life" (*isklyuchitel'no pervobuytnoi, zhivotnoi zhizn'yu*).[92] This shows how conceptions of the 'primitive' and the Siberian peasant had changed. Shchapov had used it entirely positively in his description of peasant communities, describing their society as "purely zoological or primitive humanity, but on the other, natural cooperative and social."[93]

This terminology of stagnation was regularly used in relation to the *inorodtsy* where the Russian Siberian peasants were envisaged as the colonising, civilising element. Shchapov wrote of Buriat settlements which, much like

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[90] Ibid., p.70.
[91] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, Ocherki Sibiri Dlya Narodnogo Chteniya 1 (Irkutsk, 1897), p.46.
[92] Rech, "To Ne Stol' Otdalennom Meste," *Irkutskaya Kopeika*, December 12, 1910, №,37 p.2.
[93] Shchapov, "*Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaya Obschina*," p.127.

Bulgakov's *starozhily*, were "abandoned in the wilderness... the majority of them mired in hereditary tribal poverty and mental stagnation (*nasledstvenno-rodovoi bednosti i umstvennoi kosnosti*).[94] This demonstrates the portability and adaptability of these themes, as Shchapov's civilising Siberian peasants became the backward natives of Bulgakov's analysis. Such views represent an alternate version of the fear that Russian peasants were 'slipping away' (*otpadanie*) following resettlement. By going to Siberia they were seen to lose not their 'Russianness', since the *starozhily* had better retained traditional ways, but their supposedly superior 'European' (i.e. non-Russian) capacity for positive progress. Such worries were commonly expressed by educated observers during this time, but usually in relation planter populations among foreign natives. It was also believed to be an issue of imperial importance. The historian Dmitrii Aleksandrovich Korsakov (1843-1920) tied it directly to Russia's capacity to be a civilising great power; "As long as we continue to fail to develop in ourselves a higher moral and intellectual culture we will remain unable to civilise the East as fully as we should."[95]

Language and culture

One highly symbolic example of this 'slipping away' was the potential loss or intentional forfeit of the settlers' native tongue. Language has been denoted as a key marker of difference since the days of the Greeks and 'barbarians'. As the study of races, peoples and nations became more systemised and scientific in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Romantic Nationalist "cult of language" gained widespread credence as the most objective marker of nationhood.[96] In reality, this was a far from objective process. The "manufactured or invented character, as opposed to [the] deep historical

[94] A.P. Shchapov, "Fizicheskoe Razvitie Verkholenskogo Naseleniya," *Izvestia Sibirskogo Otdel Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obschestvo* VII, №2-3 (June 1876), p.45.
[95] D.A. Korsakov, *Ob Istoricheskom znacheny postupatal'nogo dvizheniya velikorusskogo plemenina vostok* (Kazan, 1889), p.49, quoted in Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, p.216.
[96] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.xiii.

rootedness" of these "imagined communities" was predicated on a shared language to convey the supposedly common culture that bound people across dynastic borders.[97] Language was seen to be so intrinsic to the legitimacy of the 'nation' that the French state, from the First Republic onward, sought with varying levels of commitment to implement linguistic uniformity on its historically diverse regions.[98] Language and culture were also central to arguments for the creation of a German state in the nineteenth century. Another very different example of the perceived importance of language is the Kingdom of Italy, a political novelty with no historical precedent and a culturally and linguistically disparate population. The 'Italian' national tongue promoted by the expanded Piedmontese state was in reality based largely on the Tuscan dialect spoken by only 2.5% of the population.[99] Such limited resonance obviously hindered state building efforts.

Language was also an important marker of Russian identity. Nikolai Ivanovich Nadezhdin (1804-1856), the second president of the Ethnographic Division of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society and driver of the aforementioned 'national model', stated that language was "the main token and mark of nationality".[100] The enduring influence of this mindset is visible in the first ever pan-imperial Russian census in 1897; it used "native language" (*rodnom yazike*) as the criteria for determining nationality, although this decision was not universally popular.[101] Just over a decade later, the Ukrainian ethnographer and exiled People's Will terrorist Lev Shternberg's studies of the empire's remote eastern communities led him to an explicitly linguistic definition of national belonging. In the context of comparing national movements in Austria-Hungary, Russia and Germany, he concluded that "Only the population

[97] Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, 'Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Representation', in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (eds), *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York, 1996), p.8.
[98] William H. Sewell Jr., 'The French Revolution and the Emergence of the Nation Form', in Michael A. Morrison and Melinda S. Zook, *Revolutionary Currents: Nation Building in the Transatlantic World* (Lanham, Maryland, 2004).
[99] Eley and Suny, "Introduction", p.7.
[100] Nathaniel Knight, "Science, Empire and Nationality", p.126.
[101] Serebrennikov, "Zaselennost Sibiri Russkimi," p.23.

which speaks the Great Russian dialect has a privilege to be called the Russian people (*russkii narod*)."[102]

In Siberia, there was great concern about the language spoken by peasants in isolated or ethnically mixed communities. Naturally enough, the Russian dialects spoken by settlers showed the influence of native Siberian languages. A few peasant migrants in the remote far north and north-east 'went native' and adopted the language of their new community. This was a deeply troubling phenomenon to outside observers, who took it a harbinger of a deeper 'falling away' of Russian identity.[103] Markers of separateness and supposed superiority were vested with tremendous symbolic importance in European colonial situations. Enforcing European civility was cited as a means of self-preservation in a physically and culturally precarious environment, wherein the struggle against nativisation became a narrative in itself.[104] This was especially vital to Russia's Europeanised literary elites who felt the added burden of constantly needing to prove their 'European-ness' to their sceptical western neighbours.[105]

In Irkutsk, one of the main arguments espoused by 'S.V.' in favour of total uniformity between European Russian and Russian-Siberian peasants was language. Using Ukrainian Siberians as a somewhat chauvinist example, he claimed that settler populations not only retained the Russian language, but also clearly distinguishable regional dialects:

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[102] Lev Shternberg, "Inorodtsy, Obshchy obzor", in A.I. Kastelianskii (ed.), *Formy nationalnogo dvizheniia v sovremennykh gosudarstvakh. Avstro-Vengriia, Rossiia, Germaniya* (St Petersburg, 1910), pp.529-74, quoted in Tolz, *Inventing the Nation*, p.200.
[103] David Moon, "Peasant Migration and the Settlement of Russia's Frontiers, 1550-1897," *The Historical Journal* 40, №4 (December 1, 1997) p.880. See also Willard Sunderland, "Russians into Iakuts? 'Going Native' and Problems of Russian National Identity in the Siberian North, 1870s-1914," *Slavic Review* 55, №.4 (1996), pp.806-825 [viewed 22/09/2013] Available from: doi:10.2307/2501239.
[104] Jonathan Derrick, "The Dissenters: Anti-Colonialism in France, *c*. 1900-40", in Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur (eds), *Promoting the Colonial Idea: Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.58.
[105] Geraci, *Window on the East*, p.24.

> the ancient natives of Little Russia inhabiting part of the Baraba steppe [in south-west Siberia] can only be distinguished from other Russian *Sibiriakii* by their guttural 'kha'. It is impossible not to hear the characteristic sound of the Little Russian dialect, so long preserved everywhere by them, among the Cossack regiments also derived from Little Russia.[106]

S.V. went further, and claimed that variations of language were not the result of creolisation, but remnants of these regional Russian dialects missed by ignorant anthropologists:

> [W]hen we study the Archangelsk dialect we see many strange words. But then you meet them in the materials about Siberia, and so no longer wonder about their meaning. Instead you will know that, for example, the word '*tues*'', unknown in Great Russia, means beetroot, and the word '*koni*' [horses] means something else.[107]

His views were backed up by Valentin Bulgakov, whose argument for the *starozhily* as the most 'authentic' Russian peasantry included a linguistic criteria. He believed that in studying "the full outpouring of the features of the local Siberian dialects" he had found "important scientific material" for the study of the peasantry."[108]

Religion and morality

However, language was not the traditional or uncontested arbiter of Russianness. One of the main reasons put forward by analysts for the supposed moral and civil fragility of the *starozhily* was their lack of engagement with the

[106] S.V., "Puti Dlya Reshenia Voprosov O Sibirskom Krestianstve," p.8.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Bulgakov, "Zhivaya Starina v Sibiri," p.71.

Russian Orthodox Church. Dating back to the days of Muscovy, the prime marker of Russian identity had been adherence to the Russian Orthodox faith. This conception was challenged from the 1730s by scholars of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, many of whom were of German origin. Although nationalist and scientific interpretations gained ground in the nineteenth century, the quest for greater understanding of the peasantry was framed as the search for the "peasant soul".[109] As such, Orthodoxy remained a key tenet of official belonging until the fall of the Romanovs.[110] The official term for a Russian peasant remained *krest'yan*, which transliterates as 'one who has been christened'. Moreover, Siberian nomads were legally classified as "non-Christian people of another faith" (*nekhristianskie inovercheskie narodi)*.[111] Baptism remained the only way to leave the category of tribute payer and was the closest thing there was to legally-binding Russification.[112] Innate religiosity was a key aspect in traditional depictions of the *narod*. To choose just one example, Dostoevsky referred to the Russian peasantry as "God-bearing people" (*narod-bogonosets*), in contrast to the empire's corrupted elites and the people of western Europe.[113] Yet the degree of influence retained by the Orthodox Church in the final decades of the autocracy was less anomalous than is often supposed. Although at the time religion was not a cause of genuine social tension anywhere in the United Kingdom outside of Ireland, there remained, and still remains, an established church. The evangelical revivals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Britain and America played a significant role in shaping the political and moral outlook of Anglophone society.[114] Elsewhere, Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, the aggressive secularisation of the 1870s at the expense of the Catholic Church, caused dissent among Bavarians, Poles and other groups, whilst the Papacy's bitter

[109] Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, p.180.
[110] Tolz, *Inventing the Nation*, p.193.
[111] Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, p.20.
[112] Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, p.43. However, given its importance to the imperial economy, the state was not keen to reduce the amount of fur tribute it received.
[113] F.M. Dostoevsky, "Oblastitelnoe slovo po pechateamoi nizhe rechi o Pushkine", *Russkaia Ideia* (Moscow, 1992), p.132, quoted in Tolz, *Inventing the Nation*, p.87.
[114] See David Bebbington, *Victorian Religious Revivals: Culture and Piety in Local and Global Contexts* (Oxford, 2012).

opposition to the Kingdom of Italy did much to undermine its legitimacy in the eyes of many newly-minted Italians.[115] Though religion was not as closely linked to citizenship as it was in Russia, the other Great Powers were not bastions of secularism.

Robert P. Geraci has shown how Orthodoxy endured as a mark of 'Russian' identity in Siberia for longer than it did in the Russian 'core'.[116] The reasons for this seem unclear. Perhaps it was, as he states, that many of the eyewitness accounts of that period come from missionaries, who would probably have focused on spiritual matters more than secular observers.[117] Alternatively, perhaps the relative paucity of demographic and cultural exchange between modernising cities and peasant villages meant that other ideas and forms of identification were slower to develop.

There were hopes that the Russian-Siberians would provide Christian role models for the natives. However, whilst religious observance was certainly a factor in analyses of the *starozhily*, it was rarely a positive one. Removed from the supervision of the Russian Orthodox Church, they were often said to be morally inferior to their European counterparts.[118] There were five spiritual seminaries in Siberia, one of which was in Irkutsk. However, the provision of priests was woefully inadequate for such an enormous expanse of land and there were many vacant parishes. This dearth can be seen from the figures for 1907, when after twenty years of legal colonisation there were just 1 512 priests in Siberia even though "in the last three years Siberia have settled no less than 1.5 million Orthodox Christians."[119] The few priests who were in Siberia were woefully trained and remunerated, while state efforts seemed more focused on combating the threat of rival world religions like Buddhism

[115] Rebecca Ayako Bennette, *Fighting for the Soul of Germany: The Catholic Struggle for Inclusion after Unification*, Harvard Historical Studies p.178 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2012); See also Tim Chapman, *The Risorgimento: Italy, 1815-1871* (Penrith, 2008).
[116] Geraci, *Window on the East*, p.77.
[117] Ibid.
[118] David N. Collins (ed.), Samuel Turner, *Siberian Discovery: Vol. 9. Siberia: a record of travel, climbing and exploration*, (Richmond, 2000), p.79.
[119] N., “Nuzhna Li v Sibiri Dohovnaya Akedemiya?,” *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №31-2 (1908): p.70.

and Islam as a potential unifying force among the natives. Missionary investigations judged the faith of many Russian Siberians to be merely superficial, and at times deeply flawed.[120] More worryingly for Church authorities, there were tales of peasants having adopted some pagan rites and indulging in questionable practices. For a long time, Russian peasant faith was defined as 'dual faith' (*dvoeverie*), a syncretism of Christian and pagan beliefs. Their 'folk piety' (*pover'e*) was held in binary opposition to the 'church religion' (*verovanie*) of the elites.[121] While Gregory Freeze has stated that in practice there was no such division, the potency of this concept of "popular Orthodoxy" would certainly have had a strong impact on the perceptions of outside observers.[122] However, the Russian peasantry believed themselves to be true Orthodox Christians and that their practices were canonical.[123] They had little reason to think differently. Although population mobility did increase after emancipation, farming was labour intensive and travel remained difficult. Any generalisations about peasant religion are therefore hampered by local microvariability. Each *mir* was indeed its own universe in many respects; parish and village boundaries were more often than not identical. In many cases, this left the parish priest as the sole repository of spiritual knowledge. The long-standing shortage of capable priests, combined with the isolation of peasant communities, meant that for a long time "Russian Orthodoxy was Russian Heterodoxy; an aggregate of local Orthodoxies, each with its own cults, rituals and customs."[124] Such fears were magnified in the vast, sparsely populated

[120] Robert P. Geraci, "Going Abroad or Going to Russia? Orthodox Missionaries in the Kazakh Steppe, 1881-1917", in Robert P. Geraci and Mikhail Khodarkhovsky (eds), *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, 2001), pp.295-6.
[121] The notion of a semi-pagan Russian peasantry has been an enduring one. However, this notion has been challenged in recent times by the like of Chris J. Chulos, who have studied peasant self-identification and social mores. See Chulos, *Converging Worlds: religion and community in peasant Russia, 1861-1917* (DeKalb, 2003), and Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (Oxford, 2004).
[122] Gregory L. Freeze, "Institutionalising Piety: The Church and Popular Religion, 1750-1850", in Jane Burbank and David L. Ransel (eds), *Imperial Russia, New Histories for the Empire* (Indiana, 1998), pp.228-9.
[123] Eve Levin, "*Dvoeverie* and Popular Religion", in Stephen K. Batalder (ed.), *Seeking God, The Recovery of Religious Identity in Orthodox Russia, Ukraine and Georgia* (Dekalb, 1993), p.45.
[124] Freeze, "Institutionalising Piety" p.215.

East Siberian taiga. As Russian settlers moved further and further into alien lands with minimal or even no Church oversight, falling or stepping away (*otstupnichestvo*) from the church became an increasing concern.[125] As such, there was a drive to proselytise both Siberian peasants and non-Russian natives. The 1897 Irkutsk provincial guidebook reinforced this image of defective peasant religiosity, and explicitly compared it to the perceived doctrinal failings of the often forcibly-converted Buriats:

> In religious terms, the peasants go no further than ritualism, observing all the stations. Women especially go quite often to church. 'Mother of God', and *'Otchu'*[?] are known, but recited without meaning and frighteningly misinterpreted. No one can explain the 'Creed'. The concept of 'sin' is quite extensive, but not beyond the New Testament, and no more so than among the Buriats.[126]

Similar language was expressed in the markedly disillusioned memoirs of I.S. Belliustin, a parish priest in Kaliazin, Tver Oblast. He was scathing about peasant religion, saying of his parishioners, and the empire as a whole, that "two thirds of the people have not the slightest conception of the faith!"[127] Russia did not undergo a process comparable to the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation, from which came the western European ideas of a Christian faith based on Scripture and an individual relationship with God. Russian Orthodoxy remained rooted in an illiterate culture. To quote Konstantin Pobedonostsev, the reactionary Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod, Orthodoxy remained "as elusive and as insusceptible to definition as varieties of light and shade."[128]

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[125] Geraci, *Window on the East*, p.24.
[126] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, pp.45-6.
[127] Belliustin, *Description of the Clergy*, pp.31-4.
[128] Konstantin P. Pobedonostsev, trans. Robert Crozier Long, in Murray Polner (ed.), *Reflections of a Russian Statesman* (Michigan, 1965), p.195.

Concern for the piety of planter communities was common across the Great Power empires. In Britain, a perceived defect in religious adherence was often characterised as a loss of civility. Moreover, many missionary societies ran both domestic and overseas branches which "contemporary evangelicals experienced…as two fronts of the same war, separated by geographic happenstance and little more... The historical developments that gave rise to home missionary conceptions of the poor invariably reverberated in the foreign mission field and were refracted in foreign missionary discourse, and vice-versa."[129] Race and class were often conflated, with one London-based missionary stating in 1899 that the residents of isolated Lancashire villages were "as heathen and barbarian as the natives of darkest Africa."[130] Although such comparisons were used largely as a rhetorical device in the British context, that they "were even possible suggests ... that race and class were not yet the antithetical or even discrete axes of identity that they have since become" in 'Western' conceptions of society.[131]

Religious purity and freedom from superstition was also a category of comparative analysis for observers of the *novosely* and *starozhily*. Dmitrii Zavalishin believed that the *starozhily* were free of the supposedly pagan superstitions that shaped the lives of their European Russian counterparts, and so were in fact morally superior: "*Sibiriakii* do not call potatoes the devil's apples, tobacco [plantations are not seen as] diabolical land, they do not believe in sprites [or] hobgoblins."[132] He went further, claiming that "in the absence of a hereditary privileged class" there was complete racial and religious tolerance, and that the Siberian had "no enmity against foreign nationalities and religions... Tolerance was total." Zavalishin concluded this utopian story with a vague tale of

[129] Thorne, p.240
[130] Rev. C.E. Darwent, *The Story of Fish Street Church Hall* (London, 1899), p.128, quoted in Thorne, p.247.
[131] Thorne, pp.247-8.
[132] Zavalishin, "*Kolony*, Kak Stupen' v Razvity Chelovechestva (Okonchanie)," p.9.

> Old Believer Ukrainians who traded with a Jew, and lived with him in the same hut. Each yielded to the other and cleaned the house when there was one of the others' great holidays, and when the Old Believer absented himself from the house for commercial matters for an extended period, the daughter of the Jew watched over the unquenchable lamps before the icons.[133]

Alcohol

However, such idyllic scenes became noticeably rarer as the nineteenth century drew to a close. Alcohol was regularly cited for its supposedly catastrophic effect on the morals of peasants, workers and natives alike. In the late imperial period, peasant alcoholism was often portrayed as a problem that developed following the emancipation.[134] Patricia Herlihy has stated that traditional Russian peasant drinking culture was defined by the consumption of large quantities of alcohol with the express aim of inebriation, but in concentrated, periodic spells, usually around holidays. However, the growth of a cash economy in the late imperial period led to the gradual emergence, especially in urban areas, of a new drinking culture that was just as heavy, but with fewer restrictions and social controls.[135] Not only a social lubricant to cement the alliance of kulak and *volost'* clerk, alcohol was seen as a major cause of social, political and economic regression, and a harbinger of Darwinian decline and failure. A.P. Shchapov undertook a study of this issue for the Imperial Russian Geographical Society in 1875. During his sojourn in the Kudinsk-Lena region, he was scathing about the pernicious influence of what he labelled "spiritually harmful vodka" (*dushevrednoi vodkoi*) on traditional

[133] Ibid.
[134] A. Aksakov, "O narodnom p'yanstve", *Russkii vestnik*, №102 (Nov. 1872), pp.142-201. Quoted in Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, p.35.
[135] Patricia Herlihy, *The Alcoholic Empire: Vodka & Politics in Late Imperial Russia* (Oxford, 2002), p.5.

peasant communities.[136] This remark was made as part of a lengthy exposition, complete with statistics, on the fight against "that one factor that most have sought to eradicate, [in order to preserve] public morality and hygiene - the evil of tavern drinking ... the root of crime, strife and litigation in the community, the destruction of public health, mind, moral sense and working energy."[137] He also undertook a study of peasant home brewing and the role of drinking in *starozhily* society, and was saddened to report that "the demand for alcoholic beverages is no less developed among these taiga men (*taezhnikov*) than among the inhabitants of more central areas... The *Sibiriak*, I am ashamed to say, though it is a sin to hide it, likes to fall from time to time."[138] Shchapov found that the taiga peasant "especially likes to consume lots of booze at weddings", and estimated "about 4-7 buckets worth" for the groom alone, as well as "on holidays and during so-called 'helps' (*pomochi*), when wine is drunk straight from buckets."[139] Only in the isolated peasant communities of the Upper Lena, where he found the idealised elders described above, did Shchapov note that "there was not a drop of vodka" at communal meetings.[140] His wider picture of socially corrosive alcoholism was echoed a decade later in the pages of *Sibir'*. An anonymous article entitled 'Another tragic feature of peasant life' displayed all of the classic tropes of the dissolute Russian peasant - drunkenness, violence, poverty and the need for a return to paternal care. It showed no debt to the image of the proud *starozhily*:

> Rampant drunkenness ... has greatly weakened the 'morality' of the rural population. In the absence of the positive influence of schools and other social estates coming into contact with the peasantry, the example of their parents has a detrimental effect on children. At an early age, the village children, as a sign of respect for their parents, already go to the tavern themselves and are

[136] Shchapov, "*Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaya Obschina*," p.120.
[137] Ibid.
[138] A. Shch_v, "Sibirskaya 'Samosudka," *Sibirskii Sbornik*, №2 (1899), p.2.
[139] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, p.46.
[140] Shchapov, "*Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaya Obschina*," p.105.

> accustomed to drinking. The farm deteriorates; the unfortunate mother is hounded from her position for trying to keep the husband from drinking, to stop the corruption of her children and to get a piece of bread. And finally, unfortunately, the husband becomes a hopeless drunkard and beats her, and the children become idlers and street robbers. In the end, they leave either for the mines or become labourers, and the elders languish, often living on alms... There is a village (still talked of by my neighbour K-va) where women are afraid to walk the streets at dusk, where there are two murders every year, and the less said about the beatings the better... a very sad phenomenon.[141]

Intoxication was seen as a gateway to the horrors of gambling, violence and spousal abuse. The tsarist state set up temperance guardianships in the 1890s to provide what it deemed as 'suitable' entertainment such as tea rooms, public readings and theatres. Similar efforts were undertaken at a local level in rural areas by zemstvo councils.[142] As with workers and native peoples, the aim was to lead the 'dark masses' to the 'light' of a putative bourgeois morality through Christian teaching. Although alcoholism was often stereotyped as a uniquely 'Russian' problem, it troubled politicians and philanthropists across the industrialised world. In many European states, the proposed solution to 'improve' working people was the adoption of middle class habits, which their practitioners and advocates, who were of course one and the same, assumed to be correct.[143] Reflecting the potency of neo-Lamarckian ideas of heredity in Russian biological science, by the late nineteenth century there were also those who viewed alcohol as the "degenerative agent par excellence" and even believed that intoxication at the point of conception led to “idiocy” in offspring.[144]

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[141] “Eshche Pechalnoi Yavlenie Krestyanskoi Zhizni,” p.3.
[142] McReynolds, Popkin and Smith, p.80.
[143] Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire*, p.134.
[144] Ivan V. Sazhin, *Alkogol' i nasledstvennost* (St Petersburg, 1910), quoted in Beer, *Renovating Russia*, p.73.

Aside from alcohol, both peasant and alien inhabitants of Irkutsk province were seen to have little self-control. In the 'education, manners and customs' section of the 1897 provincial guidebook, the author remarked that both "The local peasants and *inorodtsy* are terribly addicted to tobacco, and start smoking at 12 years of age."[145] However, it was not just males who were portrayed as having addictive personalities. The book remarked that for children it was pine nuts, and pine resin for women; "They chew it day and night."[146] This interest in peasant consumption also extended to their diet. In European Russia, the traditional peasant staples were foods such as black rye bread, buckwheat porridge, potatoes, cabbage soup and beetroot soup. Tea, vodka and kvass were luxuries, and eating meat was rare. Perhaps as a reflection of historic food shortages, the Orthodox religious calendar incorporated a great number of fasting days. These included every Wednesday (when Jesus was supposedly betrayed), the six weeks leading up to Christmas, and the two weeks before Assumption. Dairy, eggs and meat were forbidden on a Friday.[147] The editors of the guidebook also claimed that the "The peasant eats decently only on the big holidays" when a five course feast was prepared.[148] The "typical diet" of the local peasantry was broadly in line with their European Russian equivalents. Breakfast was "brick tea with bread and potatoes; lunch - meatless soup of cabbage and cereals, cakes with mushrooms, carrots and cereals. They drink *kvass*. Previously they had a little salmon, but now it is expensive; only the old men or children catch minnows."[149] The inquest even extended to eating methods, as provided in a sketch of a typical morning scene:

> At home in the morning, the samovar is to the fore; only the poorest do not have them. Plates, knives and forks are not used - everything is served sliced and mashed. They eat with their hands

[145] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, pp.41-2.
[146] Ibid., p.43.
[147] Ronald Hingley, *Russian Writers and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd, rev. ed (London, 1977), p.125.
[148] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, p.43.
[149] Ibid.

> or a wooden spoon. A bottle, a glass, half a dozen teacups - these are the jewels of the peasant farm.[150]

This level of interest in peasant diet and eating methods is reflective of the fears of cultural backsliding and of the symbolic role that daily routine played in definitions of belonging. Consumption of 'suitable' foods was a powerful shorthand in the debate surrounding savagery and civility. Dietary taboos were a binding force for communities and a way of standardising 'normal' behaviour.[151] This is not surprising given the central role ascribed to agriculture in contemporary notions of Russianness.

Educating the Siberian peasant

It is notable that many of those defending the *starozhily* against more hostile outside observers who advocated their assimilation or even destruction did not seek to project an idealised image: "Who has not earnestly wished that [their] lack of elementary technical knowledge was replaced by a wealth of it, so that the stagnation (*kosnost'*) and ignorance (*nevezhestvo*) of the Siberian population was changed into transferable energy and education?" remarked *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* in 1891.[152] Many regionalists believed that as the march of civilisation and capitalism made change inevitable, it would be best to attempt to control this process by edifying the *starozhily* under the tutelage of the 'civilised' intelligentsia.

[150] Ibid.
[151] Hayden White, 'The Forms of Wilderness: Archaeology of an Idea', in Edward Dudley and Maximilian E. Novak (eds), *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Pittsburgh, 1972), pp.19-22.
[152] "K *Voprosu o Vliyany Pereselentsev* Na Zemledel'cheskoe Naselenie Sibiri," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, September 8, 1891, №37, p.1.

Education was a central tenet of the imperial civilising mission, and "perhaps the central locus of philanthropic efforts" in the late imperial period.[153] As its European, American and Asian rivals strove for universal primary education in the nineteenth century, the Russian government lagged ambivalently behind. Keeping in mind its well-known limitations and using its figures as a rough guide only, the 1897 Russian Empire census recorded that 26.5 million people (21%) answered the question 'Can you read?' in the affirmative. 70% of those people were in rural areas, but urban literacy was more than twice as high per capita.[154] In European Russia, 17% of the rural population was classed as literate, compared to 43% of urban dwellers.[155] However, the tsarist state belatedly began to make up ground from the 1890s. The number of state-run primary schools increased from twenty two thousand in 1880 to over eighty thousand in 1911, serving a total of four and a half million students. This meant that the highest concentration of literacy was among males under twenty-five.

However, in Siberia, the Orthodox Russian population lagged far behind other groups. For example, in Tomsk province the literacy rate among the *narod* was 16.62% for men and 4.06% for women. Muslims, and *inorodtsy* like the Buriats, often fared worse, but Orthodox Russians lagged far behind Germans, Jews, Baltic peoples and Poles.[156] The Irkutsk guidebook for 1897 estimated that excluding Kirensk district, there were almost two hundred schools in rural areas, many of which were run by church bodies.[157] Reflecting the pan-Russian trend, education provision was much scarcer in rural areas than in Irkutsk city. Using the census figures, the guidebook estimated that discounting students, adult literacy among the Russian population in four of the five districts of

[153] Control of education was believed to be vital in both domestic and colonial settings. See Margaret Szasz, *Scottish Highlanders and Native Americans: Indigenous Education in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Norman, OK, 2007).
[154] Jeffrey Brooks, "Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era", in William Mills Todd and Robert L. Belknap (eds), *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800-1914* (Stanford, California, 1978), pp.120-1.
[155] McReynolds, Popkin and Smith, p.66.
[156] I. Serebrennikov, “Gramotnost’ v Sibiri Po Dannim Perepisi 1897 G (Okonchanie №17),” *Sibirskie Voprosui* vol.3, №18 (1907), p.16.
[157] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, p.43.

Irkutsk province stood at 6 499 males and 384 females, compared to 4 667 male and 202 female *inorodtsy*.[158] In contrast to the claims of the cultural class discussed in Chapter 1, it continued that unlike in the rest of the empire, "Compulsory education for all inhabitants of the province is still not thought of. This would require at least a tenfold increase in the numbers of teachers and schools."[159] Even those schools which did exist were, in their opinion, not very good:

> The meagre study programmes and short stays in school does not given even the most loving teacher any chance to mentally develop children, and instil basic knowledge of nature, man and society. Even looking for reading material is rare among those who have completed a full course at the rural schools. The book has yet to make it into the urgent needs of the Siberian peasant or Buriat.[160]

In this instance, education did not merely imply academic learning, but moral edification and bodily cleanliness. The nineteenth century saw the growth of many groups across the empire that were committed to ameliorating the lot of the *narod*. Groups like the St Petersburg Literacy Society and the Moscow Society to Promote Educational Public Amusements published books and sponsored lectures they believed would be beneficial to the lower classes.[161] Such societies were also a hallmark of Victorian Britain. The most famous are perhaps the Young Men's Christian Association founded in 1844, and the Salvation Army, founded as the Christian Revival Society in 1865. There were countless others promoting various causes, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Movement (1873), the Institute of Hygiene (1903) and the Infants' Health Society (1904). France also saw the creation of bodies like the

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[158] Ibid. This figure did not include data for Kirensk, which was unavailable.
[159] Ibid., pp.44-5.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Joseph Bradley, 'Voluntary Associations, Civic Culture, and *Obshchestvennost'* in Moscow', in Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow and James L. West (eds) *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton, 1991), p.138.

Ligue de l'enseignement (League of Education) in 1866, which advocated a "universal, compulsory, free, and laic school system."[162]

More often than not, academic learning was not considered relevant to the Siberian peasantry. The call to focus on the *starozhily*'s mental development had been put forward by A.P. Shchapov in the 1870s. Shchapov sensed what he interpreted as the "the rudiments of such [moral] judgements among the peasantry" which "though still far from common or fully matured, are enough to show that in their minds there is rational and human initiative, which with reasonable explanation and suggestion can, without too much difficulty, be led little by little to clear, reasonably conscious ideas."[163] However, believing that the "unavoidable future of communal institutions" was one of increasing modernisation and engagement with the wider capitalist world, Shchapov felt it was the duty of the intelligentsia to shepherd the *starozhily* along the path to enlightenment by ensuring that they were educated in a way that would

> not only not initiate egoistic acquisitive competition, the fight and competition for profit, in peasants, but rather should only prepare them for the more gradual introduction of those community institutions beyond the natural, psychological measures of life and contentment, and which serve to meet the needs of the higher mental, moral and social life of the peasants.[164]

Shchapov specified the modern institutions that he deemed beneficial, namely "communal or cooperative stores, or public savings and loans banks, communal tillage or cooperatives, agricultural associations... the best community schools, libraries, reading rooms, community readings or gatherings for mental and moral education."[165]

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[162] Kathleen P. Long, *Religious Differences in France: Past and Present* (Kirksville, Missouri, 2006), p.153.
[163] Shchapov, "*Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaya Obschina*," p.121.
[164] Ibid., p.111.
[165] Ibid.

Many observers of the Siberian peasantry were appalled at what they perceived to be their negative attitude towards any kind of education. An article by Innokentii Rosen in *Sibir'* from 1877 reported on the "melancholy, more than coldness, of the peasants towards schools" in rural areas, which he blamed on the pernicious influence of local kulaks acting to defend their interests by ensuring that the local population remained unenlightened.[166] Others took a harsher line. Reflecting the less optimistic view of the peasantry in the 1880s, the *Sibir'* commentator M. Turginskii felt that it was worthless trying to instruct the *starozhily* in any aspect of their lives:

> You see, basic living conditions will remain the same; the population of the rural municipalities will still live in marshlands and not lift a finger to drain these areas. Still huddled in stifling huts together with chickens, pigs and calves, they will still overheat the stove or the hut, then run out into the yard and give themselves rheumatism. Manure will continue to rot in the courtyards rather than for any agricultural application, and contaminate the produce by its decay, like water flowing into a manhole. Still the *muzhik* will remain in partial darkness, partly from the impossibility of eating such food as would be commensurate with the condition of his body. As before, the bathhouse will remain black, and rather than serve the purposes of bodily cleanliness, will instead serve to circulate various skin diseases like syphilis, rheumatism, and so on.[167]

Housing was another symbolic marker of civility and Russianness. Cathy Frierson quoted an article in the Populist-leaning newspaper *Nedelia* (1866-1901) in which the author implored anyone clinging to idealised notions of the peasantry to recognise their suffering: "Go to the country and you will see what misery is in the peasant hut (*izba*) that can hardly be called human

[166] Innokentii Rosen, "Schkola i Krest'yanstvo," *Sibir'*, September 18, 1877, №38, p.5.
[167] M. Turginskii, "Usloviya Dlya Uluchshenioa Gigiene Derevni," *Sibir'*, February 21, 1882, №8, p.8.

habitation... It is not a living space, but a tomb."[168] *Starozhily* dwellings were used as an indicator of their prosperity, or lack thereof. Although admitting he "received nothing but courtesy" from his peasant hosts, the Muscovite military officer turned anarchist Prince P.A. Kropotkin (1842-1921), who toured East Siberia in the late 1860s, wrote that "often the smell of the huts made me feel ill... there may not be a house in the village more dignified than we would use as a cowshed."[169]

Daniel Beer has stated that such views were as much about culture and a civilising mission as about medicine and sanitation.[170] Similar connections with housing and daily ritual were visible across other Great Power empires. For example, British Anglican missionaries in Cape Colony wrote of pursuing a total reorganisation of settler and native society. They sought to inculcate 'desirable' attitudes and practices such as bourgeois individualism, a nuclear family structure, respect for private property, farming with modern tools and methods and production for the imperial free market, adherence to the Anglican faith, belief in rational thought, and adherence to contemporary standards of health and hygiene. Their focus was on the whole life, not just religious ceremony. John L. Comaroff has described this policy as the "theatre of the everyday", a doctrine which relied on new British settlers being sufficiently 'civilised' to provide a positive example for both Boers and native Africans.[171] The aim was to create an idealised representation of English rural life; houses were ordered in rows along a central street, internal rooms were created, homes were fitted with an acceptable minimum of furniture and boundaries were clearly delineated by fences.[172] These "sanitising projects" had strong parallels in concerns surrounding degeneration and morality in the metropolitan environment, as states became increasingly concerned with

[168] N. Portugalov, 'Sanitarnaia bezpunshchnost sela', *Nedelia* (Sept. 5th, 1875), p.106, quoted in Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, p.126
[169] Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, vol. 2 (London, 1899), p.195 [viewed 12/07/2011] Available from: http://www.archive.org/details/memoirsofrevolut02kropuoft.
[170] Beer, *Renovating Russia*, p.20.
[171] Comaroff, "Images of Empire", pp.163-97.
[172] Ibid.

"description, regulation and creation of order" in fluid and potentially unruly populations.[173]

Hoping to rationalise and "soften the harsh judgements made and charges laid against the Siberian peasant population", Nikolai Yadrintsev claimed that the historical lack of education in Siberia was a strong causal factor in their perceived cultural deficiencies. He argued that Siberia's frontier isolation meant that

> From the beginning, education penetrated here very weakly, and the population was doomed to ignorance (*obrecheno na nevezhestvo*). The Siberian peasant endured a struggle against nature, unarmed with cultural knowledge... We are convinced that the disadvantages of the Siberian population do not bury his natural qualities within him.[174]

The Irkutsk guidebook agreed with Yadrintsev's anti-innatist view to the extent that "neither peasants nor Buriats are deprived of mental abilities by nature".[175] However, it contradicted Zavalishin's assertions of the *starozhily*'s rational nature by claiming that in the absence of education, "the general intellectual outlook, especially of the rural inhabitants of the province, is extremely limited" and characterised their worldview as one of primitive, syncretistic suspicion:

> On any issue even slightly higher than the everyday, they are all complete ignoramuses. All sorts of superstitions and prejudices still hold sway in the minds of the people. Both men and women believe in brownies and water sprites. It is enchantments, witches and healers among the Russians. The Buriats have full confidence in the shaman. In most cases of disease, they specifically seek out

[173] Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge, 1994), p.116.
[174] "Sposobni-Li Sibiryaki," p.4.
[175] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, p.44.

> the sorceress, even if a doctor or nurse is in the village. Faced with theft, they turn to spells. Questions about physical phenomena and their causes have one stereotypical answer - 'No-one is like God.'[176]

A decade later, the situation was not deemed to have improved. *Sibirskie Voprosui* printed a series of articles concerning 'Cultural Work in Irkutsk', which detailed the various projects underway to edify the masses such as free libraries and lectures. One contributor, an A. Chernov, projected the image of much work to be done:

> If cultural work is generally necessary for the development of the self-consciousness of the [Russian] people (*samosoznaniya naroda*), then it is all the more necessary in Siberia. Even these days its population seeks to cure the bite of a rabid dog in the healing waters of Lake Baikal, while among the clergy are found such 'fathers' that in times of natural disasters like famine, consolingly preach to their flock that 'God punishes people who shirk work by acquiring agricultural machines.'[177]

Reflecting this idea of the supposedly primitive intellect of the Siberian peasantry, there was growing support for slanting their education in a more vocational direction; agriculture. Such changes are not surprising in light of the sharpening of imperial competition in the Far East and of capitalist, economic determinist interpretations of society. In an 1878 article entitled 'A Pressing Need', an author identified only as 'Z_n' but possibly one of the Decembrist Zavalishin brothers, reasoned that since farming was

> the cornerstone of the welfare of Russia... the extremely low level of agricultural knowledge among the working rural population, the fear and mistrust of the peasantry towards any innovation that aims to raise agricultural productivity, and ignorance of the

[176] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, pp.44-5.
[177] A. Chernov, "Kulturnaya Rabota v Irkutskte," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №21-2 (1908), p.30.

> technical aspects of the work force one to acknowledge the urgent need for the dissemination of agricultural knowledge among the vast majority of the population, and of the need for the establishment of agricultural schools.[178]

Compulsory agricultural training for the *starozhily* had been attempted before, on the insistence of Governor-General Count Nikolai Nikolaevich Murav'ev (1809-1881). His aim had been to teach the sons of village elders, who could then disseminate what they had learned. However, this was dismissed as a disaster in *Sibir'*: "The lads learned only to show up. But as for what to do with them, no one knew anything, and the clerks could not think of anything better for them to do [than sit around]. The lads were blissfully happy and content all day."[179] Z_n noted that these previous efforts had failed "specifically due to the backwardness of the *narod*" which meant that

> familiarisation with the basic techniques of agriculture through lectures is not sufficient to turn a peasant boy into a rational farmer... [he] needs practical work. It is necessary that the rural teacher is himself the master, and actually shows the children (and adults) the best farming techniques.[180]

One outcome of this approach was the founding of the Irkutsk Agricultural Society in December 1906. Teaching was to be solely through practical instruction, with the organisers aiming to "set up model fields of crops, forestry, beekeeping, supply the population with agricultural machines, organise readings on agricultural issues, open a library, distribute literature, etc." [181] However, despite claiming to "eschew specifically commercial objectives", its founders sought to help both established peasants and new settlers by "improving their craft and exciting in them competition for business, to show them the possibility of such improvements; in short, to

[178] Z_n, "Odna Iz Blizhayuschikh Nuzhd" *Sibir'*, October 1, 1878, №5, p.1
[179] 'Nashe Selskoe Khozyaystvo - 3', *Sibir'* (Irkutsk, 24 January 1882), №4, p.1.
[180] Z_n, "Odna Iz Blizhayuschikh Nuzhd', p.1
[181] Chernov, "Kulturnaya Rabota v Irkutskte," pp.39-40.

encourage farmers to improve their craft."[182] Russia's first agricultural school had been established in 1822 by the Moscow Agricultural Society.[183] Irkutsk was not unusually late in founding such an institution, but reflected wider turn of the century practice. Partly motivated by the disastrous famine of 1891, the number of agricultural schools in the empire increased from sixty-eight to three hundred and sixty between 1893 and 1913, and there were over three hundred separate agricultural periodicals by 1915.[184] The notion of modern, commercialised agriculture as a panacea for social progress had currency not just in Russia but across the Great Power empires. The linking of agricultural efficiency, personal wealth and civilisation was part of the wider growth of capitalist thought as an influence on domestic and imperial policy. Engagement with 'the market' became an "integral, even sanctified, aspect of civilisation" and both colonial and domestic peoples were required to become functional parts of the imperial economy.[185]

There were many in Irkutsk who greatly feared increased contact between the *starozhily* and outside elements, including European Russian peasants. This was especially the case for the regionalists. Many in their number felt that the *starozhily* were not ready for the fundamental changes that had occurred west of the Urals under the Great Reforms. They believed that the Siberian peasantry needed protection from the shocks of capitalism and modernity which would undoubtedly trigger overwhelming moral, mental and physical decline.[186] To these concerned onlookers, the Trans-Siberian Railway was the symbol of this destructive change: "In a massive repetition of the British and Belgian experience in Africa, the 'Siberians' would become the victims of

[182] Ibid., p.40.
[183] Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia* (Harvard University Press, 2009), p.75.
[184] A.A. Kaufman, *Agronomicheskaya pomoshch' v Rossii: Istoriko-statisticheskii ocherk* (Samara, 1915), p.7, referenced in David Moon, *The Plough That Broke the Steppes: Agriculture and Environment on Russia's Grasslands, 1700-1914* (Oxford, 2013), p.270.
[185] Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire*, p.178.
[186] Beer, *Renovating Russia*, p.70.

Russian imperialists."[187] Whilst these troubled souls recognised the material benefits that could the railway could bring, they believed the problem was the intentions of those who rode it. Their conclusion was that it was essential to raise the cultural level and civic mindedness of the *Sibiriakii* to prepare them for the onslaught.[188] By this somewhat tortuous logic, the regionalists' plan to protect the *starozhily* from 'Western' influence was to make them more 'westernised'. Such fears call to mind Cathy Frierson's characterisation of the "grey peasant" (*seryi muzhik*). Frierson has characterised this "peasant icon" as a reaction to nearly two decades of "unsatisfactory" peasant interaction for the cultural classes, which led to a decline in romanticised imagery, the related trend towards psychological realism in contemporary literature and art, and a general mood of social and moral decline; he was "grey in the sense of being neither pure and untainted nor wholly evil and thus dark or black." [189] Importantly for the prospects of Russian colonisation, "this figure was a weak human being who lacked either the moral or the intellectual strength to survive with integrity in his changing world. Dependent on the assimilated traditions of the old village, he collapsed in one way or another under the pressure of the new."[190]

In pursuing these aims, governments became more socially interventionist in both domestic and colonial affairs. Post-Modernist thinkers like Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas and Norbert Elias have cited the dovetailing of notions of human perfectibility with these interventionist policies as the driving force behind the creation of modern European societies. Their leaders sought to regulate human behaviour as never before through public projects such as schools, hospitals and prisons which focused on the creation of rational order and collective identities.[191] Although the autocratic Russian Empire could be considered ill-fitted to such liberal narratives, belief in human perfectibility

[187] W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent: Siberia and the Russians*, Cornell Paperbacks (Ithaca, 2007), p.226.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, p.117.
[190] Ibid., p.118.
[191] McReynolds, Popkin and Smith, p.57.

and social renewal were common to both autocratic governments and liberal reformers. Under the influence of German materialism and French positivism, belief in the mutability of the lower classes was widespread among the Russian intelligentsia who, as Daniel Beer has shown, largely interpreted these ideas of 'progress' and 'modernisation' as the dissemination of their own values to the Russian *narod*.[192] As stated above, exposure to the supposed moral morass of the emancipated village caused many to advocate the reintroduction of traditional noble guardianship (*opeka*).

It is clear from the tone and content of the debate surrounding the merits of the *starozhily* that there were many observers who were unsure whether their role was as a civilising element or an element to be civilised. Like Dostoevsky at the start of this chapter, the Slavophile historian and Moscow native Mikhail Petrovich Pogodin (1800-1875) characterised the *narod* as "marvellous, but marvellous so far only in potential."[193] In Siberia, the desire to 'improve' the population led to the diminution of the parish (*volost'*) commune, the requisitioning of *starozhily* land, the introduction of land ownership and the active promotion of resettlement and commercial agriculture. These sweeping changes were indicative of a desire to fundamentally transform the Siberian peasant village. Whilst Romantic images of the *Sibiriakii* remained, they were increasingly pushed aside by the drive for modernisation and standardisation. There was a clear desire "to align the position of the Siberian peasant with the Russian" from advocates both inside and outside Irkutsk province.[194] The implication was that the *starozhily* were living an inferior lifestyle, one which did not fit with the social, political and economic demands of a modern imperial state. As described in Chapter 4, the same transformationist culture and organising tendencies were visible in attitudes expressed towards the Buriats of Irkutsk province; the state sought to settle, convert and peasantise

[192] Beer, *Renovating Russia*, p.19.
[193] Quoted in N.V. Raisonovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationalism in Russia, 1825-1855* (Berkeley, CA, 1959), p.99.
[194] L. Ch., "Iskusstvennoe Sozdanie Agrarnogo Voprosa v Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №8 (1908), p.29.

them. As subsistence was the prime concern of peasant life, it is not surprising that farming carried deep religious and national symbolism. Even into the nineteenth century, peasant agriculture retained a “semi-religious” element, whereby the land itself was personified as "Moist Mother Earth, the great provider". [195]

The rural economy

> Bread is expensive, and hay is expensive, and meat is expensive. And anyway, there isn’t any of the first, or the second, or the third. Suburban farmers go to buy their grain in the city, but they bring very little to market. Try to buy livestock within fifty versts of Irkutsk: it cannot be done. All hopes now rest on Transbaikal, even on Mongolia. What has happened?[196]

The study of peasant economics, or at least the increasing importance of statistical and anecdotal data, played a significant role in the debates surrounding the *starozhily* and *novosely*, as well as on the future of East Siberia. An increasing number of observers sought to interpret the lot of the Siberian peasant not in anthropological or spiritual terms, but in relation to his environment and the wider market. Well aware of the potential political, cultural, social and economic ramifications, the Irkutsk cultural class were widely-read and actively engaged in the debate surrounding the economic capabilities of the Siberian peasantry. The empire-wide scope of the issue can be seen from a report of a speech given by the noted agronomist, Kadet politician and sometime employee of the Resettlement Administration Professor A.A. Kaufman to the Free Economic Society in St Petersburg on 12th March 1891, and reported in *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* on 19th May. It is an article in an Irkutsk journal reporting on a talk given by a Belorussian Jew to a learned

[195] Chulos, p.18.
[196] ‘Nashe Selskoe Khozyaystvo - 1’, *Sibir’* (Irkutsk, 10 January 1882), №2, p.1.

society in St Petersburg, and contains replies from several dignitaries including the famed Yadrintsev.[197] The report states, perhaps sardonically, that Yadrintsev was just one of many *Sibiriakii* in attendance, "who wanted to finally learn whose side truth was on, and whether the Siberian peasant really could not run his farm, and saw the light only with the coming of the newcomer, or settler, as some have claimed."[198] This followed decades of debate during which the myth of the *starozhily* assumed another aspect. It was no longer enough to portray them as brave agricultural pioneers; they also had to be productive peasants. Needing to secure their Far Eastern possessions from both European and Asian rivals, the tsarist state put greater emphasis on the economic success of East Siberia. Prosperity and population growth were the tools for entrenching the superiority of the conquering race. Poor settlers were problematic in such a model.[199]

These criticisms were comprehensive, right back to the moment of creating a farmstead. The traditional 'drying' (*podsukha*) of virgin taiga land was described in 1885 as a "primitive and antiquated system requiring so much labour and so much time that the farmers are not willing to do it" unless in acute need.[200] Despite this supposed wastefulness, *podsukha* was still being used until the end of the tsarist era, having been adopted by new settlers. The only difference was the forward-thinking if slightly reckless-sounding "experiments being performed with machines and explosive substances to accelerate land clearance."[201]

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[197] Such summaries appear to have been quite common at this time as a useful device for keeping *Irkutyan* readers informed of the latest debates on subjects pertinent to them. See 'K *Voprosu o Vliyany Pereselentsev* Na Zemledel'cheskoe Naselenie Sibiri', *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, (№21) 8th September, 1891, pp.1-4.

[198] "Sposobni-Li Sibiryaki," p.2.

[199] Stoler, "Colonial Knowledge and Imperial Power", in Howe, p.190.

[200] "O Zemledely v Irkutskoi Gub.," *Sibir'*, July 21, 1885, №30, p.2. The method involved slicing into the bark of surrounding trees to stake a claim. The trees would then be left to slowly die, and then be burned the following spring to create a clearing (*poschist*). F.G., 'Selskaya Obschina v Kirenskom Okruge', *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, 18 August 1883, №33, p.10.

[201] *Izdanie Irkutskogo Peresenelcheskogo Rayona, Opisanie Irkutskoy Guberny, Spravochnaiia Knizhka Dlya Khodokovil Pereselentsev* (Irkutsk, 1913), p.6.

When farmsteads had been established, *starozhily* farming practices were often claimed to be similarly inefficient and antiquated. It was alleged in an 1884 article in *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* entitled 'Siberian Land Surplus and Land Hunger' that "under the Siberian system of arable cultivation, more land is required because half of it lies fallow."[202] These techniques, combined with the vast expanses of fallow land that had been 'claimed' but lay unused, meant that from "Siberian peasants everywhere, including in the land surplus *volost'*s, you hear one complaint - that ploughing land has become scarce."[203] This widespread criticism was motivated by consistent food shortages and mounting peasant arrears. An 1874 article in *Sibir'* spoke fearfully of "the worst of disasters; a general crop failure. Were it to happen here, the horrors of famine would be inevitable, and in the absence of any means of communication, losses cannot be averted, even for the following year."[204] Peasant debts had grown "to the point that repayment [was] an impossibility."[205] Such fears were realised in 1879, when crop failure "befell most of the province" and led to a prohibitively high cost of living for the peasantry.[206] This problem did not seem to abate, and similar issues of costs were raised three years later in an two-part article in *Sibir'* entitled 'Our Rural Economy'.[207] The second part of this article was especially bleak, stating that "yields such as there were forty years ago are already long gone", the halcyon days of *starozhily* agriculture were over and that production had fallen to subsistence levels.[208] In 1887, a bitter correspondent to *Sibir'* wrote that "Two years of poor harvests have completely ruined them; here he is, our wealthy *Sibiriak*! The need for grain is so acute that about a third of households, for the most part deprived of their livestock by plague, are compelled to sell their last horse to somehow feed themselves."[209] By 1891, increasingly statistical

[202] "Sibirskoe Mnogozemel'e I Malozemel'e," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, August 25, 1883, №34, p.1.
[203] Ibid.
[204] "Obshchestvennie zapasi v nekotorom seleniy-1," *Sibir'*, April 3, 1874, №40, p.2.
[205] "Urozhai 1882 Goda," *Sibir'*, August 15, 1882, 33 №,2, p.1.
[206] "Bolee Na Ispol'zovaniy 'Irkutyan' Kak Naimenovaniya," *Sibir'*, January 6, 1880, №1, p.1.
[207] "Nashe Selskoe Khozyaistvo - 1," p.1.
[208] 'Nashe Selskoe Khozyaystvo - 2', *Sibir'* (Irkutsk, 17 January 1882), №3, p.1.
[209] "Korrespondentsi," *Sibir'*, April 19, 1887, №16, p.6.

analysis of *starozhily* agriculture painted a sobering picture. Some grain stores were said to be completely empty, and the Irkutsk peasant population owed 240 000 roubles in back taxes.[210] However, whilst the present generation of *starozhily* were not absolved of blame for their clumsy practices, they were portrayed as merely compounding the mistakes of their forebears:

> …deterioration occurs slowly, and the factors influencing agricultural change do not occur suddenly. Forests, for example, have been cut down and burned for half a century, and now nothing remains but to reap the whirlwind of presumptuousness sown by the elders in the taiga and the well-irrigated areas.[211]

As reported in *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, A.A. Kaufman's speech to the Free Economic Society provoked a reply from the reactionary publicist and native of Voronezh Pyotr Evgenevich Astaf'ev (1846-1893), who put forward a similar picture of decay. He stated that during his sojourn in Tunka village west of southern Baikal, he had "encountered several villages with large, half-ruined buildings which testify to the past greatness and riches of the Siberian village."[212] This change in circumstance, he claimed, was due to the fact that these initial colonisers' "intensive struggle with nature and the *inorodtsy*" had passed into legend and the “initial abundance” provided by the fertile soil severed the innate link between peasant and all-consuming labour. Astaf’ev posited that as a consequence of this,

> The absolute fullness and contentment of Siberian life imposed a sharp imprint on his character: the *Sibiriak* became entirely inert (*kosnym*), poor and clumsy of thought, and did not progress (*progressiroval*) intellectually. The *Sibiriak* took what was given to him by abundant nature, but he frittered it all... Life moved on, but the *Sibiriak* himself remained inert. Finally, the gifts of nature were

[210] “Krestyanskiya Nedoimkiy,” *Sibir’*, March 1, 1887, №9, p.3.
[211] “Nashe Selskoe Khozyaistvo - 2,” p.1. For a study of the ecological impact of Russian peasant settlement, see Moon, *The Plough That Broke the Steppes*.
[212] “K Voprosu O Vliyaniy Pereselentsev,” p.2.

> exhausted, contentment collapsed and the *Sibiriakii* began to grow poor. With a richer intellect, with greater mental development, and greater enterprise ... the *Sibiriak* would have found his bearings. However, at this time he is entirely lost and rushes around like a prisoner locked in a cage. He sees that the ground is slipping from under his feet and his former legendary satiety is disappearing ... but still cannot exert any force to counteract it.[213]

Astaf'ev's analysis recalls both contemporary characterisations of colonised peoples wilting in the face of 'modernity', and the Russian peasant in the importance ascribed to a life of all-encompassing agricultural labour. However, Astaf'ev rejected the usual positivity of the character Cathy Frierson has dubbed the "rational peasant", which posited that however irrational it appeared to outsiders, peasant agriculture was entirely suited to their needs.[214] The importance of labour was also referenced by the likes of A.N. Engelgardt and G.I. Uspenskii, who believed the peasants saw their ties to the land as sacrosanct, and so were reluctant to innovate for fear of causing disharmony. Careful to state his belief that "the peasant is... not something unique from the rest of mankind", Uspenskii believed that environmental factors had produced a people for whom "the single most important quality lying at the foundation of [their] existence ... [is] agricultural labour."[215] His exposition was reflective of the admixture of biological and anthropological language and theories employed by many peasant observers at the time:

> Tear the peasant away from the earth, from these cares that she imposes on him, away from the interests with which she worries the peasant; make him forget his 'peasantness' and there will be nothing of this *narod*, no popular outlook, nothing of the warmth

[213] Ibid.
[214] Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, pp.76-100.
[215] G.I. Uspenskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 4:116, quoted in Ibid., p.89.

> that comes from the people. There will remain the empty machine of an empty human organism.[216]

A.P. Shchapov's analysis of the economic activity of the Kudinsk-Lena peasantry mirrored these views. He believed that the Irkutsk peasantry in remote locations had made a conscious choice to eschew non-agricultural activity due to "a natural, instinctive intolerance towards the development within the organically bonded communal union of an egoistic acquisitiveness [that is] against the communal spirit, parasitic greed at the expense of the commune."[217] However, in the same article Shchapov also provided examples which fitted very closely to the idea of the Uspenskii's rational farmer. Uspenskii wrote approvingly of a peasant's decision to seek professional veterinary treatment for his cattle while relying on with home remedies for his family, and equated such thinking to the single-minded, self-sacrificing dedication of a great Parisian artist.[218] Shchapov cited a common attitude among the Lena peasantry whereby "if someone, somewhere had his wife fall ill during the harvest season, he is commiserated no so much for his wife's illness, but about the loss of labour and the stopping of work."[219] He continued that

> in the relentless bustle of activity and in the faces of most peasants there is the fullest, most serious, all-consuming, passionate concern for fieldwork. Only a true, serious toiler and scientific specialist loves his scientific work. Likewise, in our steppe community the hardworking peasant loves his work, especially harvesting the fields. The fullness of the all-consuming concern of

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[216] Ibid.
[217] Shchapov, "*Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaya Obschina*," p.114.
[218] V.E. Cjeshikhin, *Gleb Ivanovich Uspenskii: Biograficheskii ocherk* (Moscow, 1929), p.32, quoted in Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, p.96.
[219] Shchapov, "*Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaya Obschina*," p.109.

> the peasant for work often drowns out all other cares and sorrows close to his heart.[220]

Whatever their perceived work ethic, Siberian peasants were accused of committing rudimentary errors in their farming practice. Whilst making some concessions for the variable climate and "a lack of manpower", *Sibir'* characterised the situation as "agricultural stagnation" which they blamed on "the attitudes of the proprietors to new methods and means of cultivating their fields. The notion of land fertilised with manure is almost never thought of and careless, reckless ploughing does not protect the winter crops from the harmful effects of the winds of spring and snowless winters." [221] In characterising Siberian peasant society as ossified and lacking innovation, these writers were able to rationalise an acceptance of the idealised, abundant past of the free-born *starozhily* with the problematic communities they encountered. This was the same strategy employed by European observers in relation to great civilisations they had come to dominate or colonise in South America and Asia. Glorifying past achievements and implying that somehow these cultures had fallen behind Western 'progress' allowed both 'Orientalist' interest in these cultures and an easy justification for their subjugation.[222]

However, there were defenders of the *starozhily* who provided a robust defence of their agricultural abilities. A 1906 article in *Sibirskie Voprosui* reasserted the characterisation of their *Sibiriak* ancestors as brave pioneers "basing themselves in a country they had not yet conquered... not too far from the Cossack forts."[223] In keeping with the capitalist zeitgeist, this familiar heroic narrative was overlain with the image of the pragmatic peasant agriculturalist:

> they had to settle along the routes they encountered, the conditions of which... in general terms, could not be considered

[220] Ibid., p.114.
[221] "O Zemledeliy v Irkutskoy Gub.," p.3.
[222] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Oxen, 2012), p.74.
[223] V. Grigor'ev, "Znachenie Pozemel'nogo Ustroistva Dlya Naseleniya Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui* vol. 2, №7 (1906), p.76.

> favourable... Indeed, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the migrants in these periods of agricultural settlement of the country settled it in the best possible way, although of course not without some exceptions.[224]

Others sought to tie the arrival of these first pioneers in Irkutsk to the immediate implementation of agriculture, and the supposed Russification of the land, in a single mythology:

> People became engaged in sowing grain soon after the appearance of the Russians in Irkutsk province, about 300 years ago. The first inhabitants (*zasel'schiki*) went from north to south and then east, and arable farming evolved in the same direction. Even in 1675, the first Russian ambassador to China, Nikolai Spafarii, riding along the current Yakutsk tract, observed in Verkholensk and the northern part of Irkutsk province large grain crops.[225]

Others sought to use modern empirical methods to challenge the perception that contemporary *starozhily* agriculture was archaic. A 1907 article in *Sibirskie Voprosui* quoted a report from the Verkhneudinsk branch of the Resettlement Administration which stated that the turnover of the local agricultural machinery warehouse went from two hundred roubles in 1905 to twenty-five thousand roubles in 1907.[226] The report concluded that whilst new settlers were helping to drive sales, "the *starozhily* are buying in large numbers, having not so long ago distrusted all kinds of innovations."[227] They had been quick to take up the offer from the agricultural warehouses to purchase the "renowned Sharapov plough", as well as millions of roubles worth of reapers, winnowers

[224] Ibid., pp.77, 79.
[225] *Izdanie Irkutskogo Peresenelcheskogo Rayona*, p.4. Spafarii was a Moldavian diplomat whose real name was Nicolae Milescu.
[226] B. Altaiskii, "Sudbi Pereselencheskikh Skladov v Sibiri, 2," *Sibirskie Voprosui* vol. 3, №32 (1907), p.14.
[227] N.S., "Khronika Selsko-Khozyaystvennoy Zhizni Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №1 (1907), p.92.

and threshers, peaking at three million roubles of sales in 1906.[228] Whilst their advocates continued to argue for an economically dynamic *starozhily*, the transfer of these agricultural warehouses from the Ministry of the Interior to the Resettlement Department on 23rd December 1897, and the concomitant switch of focus to "areas newly opened for settlement" showed the persistence of the old dichotomy of stubborn Siberian and evangelising new settler.[229] Moreover, not all local observers had been so effusive about their fellow *Irkutyani*. The 1897 provincial guidebook stated that

> Given the comparative abundance of land, forests and other natural resources, combined with fertile soil and high prices for agricultural products, one would expect that the residents of Irkutsk province lived happily ever after. It fact, this is far from the case ... homeless and horseless people ... have dropped out of agriculture, the primordial peasant industry. The reasons are many. The biggest is ignorance, foolish economics.[230]

In spite of the fervour and comprehensiveness of this debate, a strain of thought from the old days of the conquest remained; the fundamental impossibility of knowing Siberia or its people. As empiricism, positivism and categorisation became increasingly dominant in Russian science, government and culture, statistics were increasingly seen as a neutral arbiter of knowledge.[231] However, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, Siberia remained a land of contradictions and mystery. There were repeated complaints in the Irkutsk press about under-government leading to a lack of information on prices, yields and distribution. An 1882 article in *Sibir'* complained that since *starozhily* agriculture "ha[d] not yet been subjected to

[228] B. Altaiskii, "Sudbi Pereselencheskikh Skladov v Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui* vol.3, №31 (1907), p.23. The Sharapov plough was invented by the soldier, economist, writer and conservative politician Sergei Fedorovich Sharapov (1855-1911), exhibited worldwide and won numerous international awards.
[229] Altaiskii, "Sudbi Pereselencheskikh Skladov v Sibiri," p.24.
[230] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, p.40.
[231] McReynolds, Popper and Smith, pp.86-7.

scientific scrutiny" any conjecture on the state of local farming would be “merely arbitrary."[232] Likewise, a year later the same publication complained about the "blank spaces" in statistical tables about Siberia, and stated that this situation would not improve because "Due to the absence of men of science in Siberia, no one has even thought to take it upon themselves to collect that data that would help to clarify this situation."[233] There was also anger at the perceived arrogance of outside observers

> who, in the words of the late S.Ya. Kapustin, observe Siberian life from a vehicle, jump in with the courier on the high roads, deal with coachmen and tavern servants, and have never seen the working Siberian population (*trudyashchegosiya sibirskogo naseleniya*) on whom they cast judgement. One can only speak of Siberian farming and the peasant economy if one has observed it, and very little material has been collected on that.[234]

Even though landholding surveys and scientific expeditions had traversed the region for decades, the situation was not seen to improve. In 1908, a contributor to *Sibirskie Voprosui* known only as 'S.Sh.' complained that the debate surrounding resettlement "recalls, in truth, the desire to empty the sea with a bucket... [T]he fantastical aspects of the resettlement question ... [and] other utopian agricultural 'measures' show a large dose of determination and creativity on the part of their authors, but little actual knowledge."[235] Similarly, there were also a few members of the Irkutsk cultural class, regionalists included, who criticised the very concept of all-Siberian agricultural analyses. Even the "sketchy information" collected was enough to demonstrate that in a province bigger than "every single province of European Russia, and even

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[232] “Urozhai 1882 Goda,” p.1.
[233] “Nashe Selskoe Khozyaistvo - 1,” p. 1.
[234] “Sposobny-Li Sibiryaki,” p.2.The author referred to here is Semen Yakovlevich Kapustin (1828-1891) a writer born in Tobolsk province, who moved to St Petersburg in 1864 to advise the Ministry of the Interior as an expert on the peasant question. This was a common career path, even for the most ardent *Sibiriak*.
[235] S. Sh., “Sibir' i Pereseleniye,” *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №10 (1908), pp.2-3.

whole European states ... farming is not in the same state in all districts" with varying amounts of taiga cover, accessible farmland, water resources, and so on.[236]

Novosely: Population growth and prosperity?

> With such an insignificant population, it is most natural that the greater part of this enormous expanse has not only never been exploited, but has barely even been visited by man.[237]

The most frequent point of contrast in characterisations of the *starozhily* was the new settlers, or 'newcomers' (*novosely*), who migrated to Siberia in the final decades of the Romanov dynasty. The 'colonisation question' (*kolonizatsiy vopros*) came to East Siberia as early as the 1840s, although "on a very limited scale." [238] It was only with gradual legalisation and systematisation in the 1880s that the 'great resettlement movement' took off. Even though East Siberia as a whole received only six hundred thousand settlers between 1896 and 1915, Irkutsk's location on the route to the Amur and its regional administrative role meant that its cultural class felt it was "impossible not to notice" that the resettlement question was "at the front of the queue in Russian national life."[239] Writing in the 1930s, the anti-Bolshevik economist Anatole Baikalov believed it had been successful, and stated that "the total land under cultivation increased 122% between 1897 and 1917, rising from 14 156 000 acres to 31 433 400 acres, according to official figures. This outstripped population growth, meaning that there was 217.6 acres per person in 1917, up from 172 acres per person in 1897".[240] W. Bruce Lincoln has viewed resettlement in a similarly positive light. He claimed that Siberian

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[236] "O Zemledely v Irkutskoi Gub.," p.2.
[237] Ibid.
[238] V. Grigor'ev, "Znachenie Zemleustroistva Dlya Naseleniya Sibiri (2)," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №3 (1906) p.79.
[239] Sibirskii Publitsist, "Po Voprosu Issledovanya Pereselenikh," *Sibir'*, February 17, 1880.
[240] Baikalov, "Siberia since 1894," p.334.

agriculture as a whole was more productive than in European Russia.[241] This optimism was certainly shared in Irkutsk. At the climax of an 1880 *Sibir'* article which advocated provincial government subsidies for *novosely* staging posts, the author concluded with an impassioned plea for understanding: "No one else is as interested in the fate of migrants and equipping them as Siberian society. These are the golden hands of this country (*zolotiya ruki stranui*), her future strength, wealth and power. Remember it, *Sibiriakii*!" [242] Even Yadrinstev, the arch regionalist, advocated "an intensification of the development of Siberian colonisation... Population density is a natural motivating impulse for culture and civilisation; wilderness affords space, but forces the individual to struggle against nature, separating life, and isolating it."[243] Much like the ambivalence of folklorists like V.F. Bulgakov, mainstream regionalist support for colonisation was seemingly based on concepts heavily influenced by European positivism and notions of 'progress'. The argument ran that an increase in population would lead to a stronger and perhaps more modern economy, and so increase the level of 'civilisation' in Siberia.

However, in Irkutsk, perceptions of the new settlers themselves were diverse. These *novosely* were of course European Russian peasants, and the vast literature on the 'peasant question' framed many of their characterisations. From a Romantic, myth-making standpoint, they did not have the heroic origin story of the *starozhily*. They were viewed dismissively by some as failed peasants, a "rural proletariat" driven not by a yearning for freedom but by land hunger and the capitalist goal of economic betterment.[244] However, their defenders retorted that colonisation was a shared, all-Russian past, and fused it with contemporary analysis on the universal rights of man to construct a claim for the *novosely* land rights: "Russian society forgets that the life of the

[241] Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent*, p.160.
[242] "Priyuti Dlya Pereselentsev," *Sibir'*, February 17, 1880, №7, p.1.
[243] P.N., "Literaturnaya Kritika Pismo 1; Kolonizatsionnaya Skhemi I Russkoe Nedomislie, E.D. Zimmerman," *Sibir'*, February 12, 1878, №2, p.171.
[244] A. Ch., "Amurskiie Pereselentsi," *Sibir'*, December 24, 1878, №49-50, p.1.

Russian *narod*, in the old days, made its way through resettlement, and that moving to ensure a better life for themselves is a natural human right."[245]

Unlike in previous generations, this movement was also increasingly driven and subsidised by the tsarist state. Neo-Malthusian ideas about the dangers of overpopulation and land hunger were widely accepted in European Russia and just as easily transported to Siberia.[246] In Britain, they were conflated with Social Darwinist and eugenic thinking, which lead to calls for the supposed 'excess' population to be settled overseas to ensure the racial 'stock' was adequately robust to produce future generations of soldiers, settlers and officials. Such ideas were famously advocated by the historian J.R. Seeley in his heralded 1883 book *The Expansion of England*.[247] Others, most notably the left-wing economist and newspaper editor J.A. Hobson, insisted that resettlement as a "safety valve for overpopulated countries" was "little more than a demagogic fantasy", as any migration would simply cause the remaining population to increase their birth rate and consume any surplus.[248] The Russian Empire witnessed a similar debate in the decades of rapid population growth that followed emancipation. In 1878, *Sibir'* characterised the 1861 decision to legalise resettlement to the Amur region as an attempt to "turn the Amur into a safety valve (*predokhranitel'nuim klapanom*) for those provinces of European Russia where overly small plots of land could in the future threaten to produce a rural proletariat".[249] In 1892, the famed Siberian explorer, statistician and head of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society Pyotr Petrovich Semenov-Tian-Shanskii wrote that population growth in European Russia had caused a rapid fall in wages and a concomitant rise in rents, but worst of all it meant that "peasants with perfect black earth soil and their own allotment land could not, with an average yield, produce enough grain to feed

[245] "Kolonizatsiya i Ee Znachenie," p.1.
[246] Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, p.199. The role of Malthusian ideas in Russian human sciences is not universally accepted. See Daniel P. Todes, *Darwin Without Malthus: The Struggle for Existence in Russian Evolutionary Thought* (New York, 1989).
[247] Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire*, p.93.
[248] John Cunningham Wood and Robert D. Wood, *John A. Hobson: Critical Assessments of Leading Economists* (London, 2003), p.xxxviii.
[249] Ch., "Amurskiie Pereselentsi," p.1.

themselves. In this lies the main reason for the impoverishment of the peasantry, especially in areas that have reached the extreme limit of their capacity."[250] His solution was to use imperial resettlement as "a safety valve for national calamities (*predokhranitel'nuim klapanom ot narodnikh bedstvui*)" but cautioned that "this kind of population transitioning from one state to the other, if not taking centuries, then at least proceeds very slowly and cannot be achieved artificially or directly through governmental measures." [251] Such statements reflected the growth of ideas of material determination whereby the colonist was stripped of any noble connotations, and portrayed as a solely rational actor driven by desperation. Tian-Shanskii reported the explanation given to him by one peasant settler:

> I have no farm here, we have eaten the cattle, my land has been seized for taxes, the house is sold, and having paid my debts I have only a three rouble banknote, a big family, and no work available in the commune... Here we'll die of hunger, but perhaps there we won't all die.[252]

Certainly agricultural factors in European Russia provided motivation for Siberian migration. Alongside the lifting of legal restrictions, the devastating famine of 1891-2 drove many to seek betterment elsewhere. This was exacerbated by the dogmatic policies of the Minister of Finance Ivan Vyshnegradskii's and his successor Sergei Witte, who both prioritised exports "not out of excess but out of current needs" in an effort to rectify the balance of payments deficit caused by increased imports of industrial machinery.[253]

Whilst they remained in situ, European Russian peasants were a potent but abstract standard against which Irkutsk's cultural class could judge their own

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[250] P.P. Semenov, "Znachenie Rossii v Kolonizatsionnom Dvizhenii Evropeiskih Narodov," *Izvestia Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obschestvo* XXVIII, №4 (1892), p.362.
[251] Ibid., pp.355-6.
[252] Ibid., p.364.
[253] Witte, Quoted in Michael Kort, *The Soviet Colossus: History and Aftermath*, 5th ed. (New York, 2001), p.51.

agriculturalists. However, the diminishing of resettlement restrictions meant that the 'peasant question' and the 'resettlement question' became increasingly connected. When a peasant became a 'colonist' or 'settler', he would be judged on his ability to succeed at that task and all that it entailed before he could return to business of agriculture. The first of these potential new settlers to arrive were usually the scouts (*khodoki*). However, they were seemingly not akin to the fearless pioneers (*pioneri*) of old: "They typically neither blazed new paths nor explored new territory but rather inspected land already marked by surveyors for new settlement or tried to gain entry for their families and other clients to communities of previous settlers."[254] There was no heroism in these depictions. One such exposition of the character of scouts, published in *Sibir'* in 1882, was reminiscent of a comedy of errors. It purported to be the story of Arbuzov, a peasant from Ryazan province, who was required to return home to plead his case to the village in person as they had denounced his letters home as from some "false Abruzov" who desired to defraud them.[255]

The journey of new settlers to Siberia was studied intensely across the empire. In Irkutsk, the narrative of migration was overwhelmingly one of suffering and deprivation. Similarly bleak opinions were expressed by the travellers with whom the *novosely* shared these routes, if not their experience of them. Outside observers produced some of the most striking images of Siberian migration. Tales abounded of whole villages huddled on trains or steamers, with rags covering their filthy, emaciated frames. The American travellers Richardson Little Wright and George Bassett Digby, introducing a starkly racial aspect rarely seen in the Siberian context, were shocked to see "what purports to be civilised humanity at its lowest level… [we were] unprepared for this degree of degradation among whites."[256] Their compatriot, the clergyman

[254] Lewis Siegelbaum, "Those Elusive Scouts: Pioneering Peasants and the Russian State, 1870s-1950s," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 14, №1 (Winter 2013), p.32.
[255] "Pereseleniyakh v Sibir'," *Sibir'*, April 25, 1882, №,17, p.1.
[256] David N. Collins (ed.), Richardson Little Wright and George Bassett Digby, *Siberian Discovery: Vol. 10*, *Through Siberia: an empire in the making*, (Richmond, Surrey, 2000), p.100.

Francis Edward Clark, remarked that "If there were fifth-class cars, there were plenty of sixth and seventh-class people - some in rags, and many in tags, but few in velvet rags... half naked children, filthy with grime that had accumulated since their birth, and alive with unmentionable parasites."[257] Given the hopes that many had for these new settlers (*pereselentsi*) as the agents of renewal and modernisation in Siberia, it is startling how often they were presented in ways that recalled the most abject characterisations of the Russian peasantry.

Related to this are the lengthy discussions surrounding the body and soul destroying nature of the journey. Irkutsk, on the road to the Amur and the Russian Far East, witnessed many settlers passing though. In the 1870s, *Sibir'* often provided anecdotal evidence of peasant settlers found roaming the provincial roads. The account of an author identified only as 'Ch.' was typically harrowing. Ch. claimed to have encountered a party from Poltava ravaged by typhus, consumption and fever, as well as a "settler who came out of Kharkov province with two adult sons and a household of eight souls; he was the only one to reach as far as Irkutsk."[258] Sickness and death were constant themes in these descriptions:

> Almost all settlers who manage to make it to Siberia are so skinny that the look like skeletons, and are dressed like the very worst tramp. All among them are in a depressed frame of mind. Oh, but for one healthy man in the crowd! This absolute deprivation and the long journey are as a new Procrustean bed, relentlessly wearing down all persons to a single measure.[259]

[257] Francis Edward Clark, *A New Way Round an Old World* (New York, 1970), p.132, quoted in Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent*, p.257.
[258] Ch., "Amurskiie Pereselentsi," p.2.
[259] Ibid., p.2. Procrusteus was a figure from Greek mythology who stretched travellers or cut off their legs so that they would fit in the bed he offered them. In modern times, a 'Procrustean bed' is a dogmatically enforced, arbitrary standard. In this case, the author is referring to the trek to Irkutsk as something that all settlers are made to endure, even though other means existed.

There was a futility about these characterisations. Contemporary theories of successful resettlement were increasingly predicated on material concerns like wealth and physical strength, rather than personal qualities. Ch. stated that "strapping, good workmen can in two or three years get on their feet and establish quite a farmstead," yet new settlers were seen to have expended all of their physical strength on the road.[260] The peasants of Ch.'s article, on their march to civilise the wilds of Siberia, were proving unfit, and dying out:

> Terribly skinny, with sunken chests and a distinctive hacking cough, [this] vividly shows that these people will never live prosperously, that they will never come to be good workers. It will take a long time to forget the bitter smile that answered our words, 'What are we here for? We are here to die!'... It is, if it were even needed, further proof that such immigrants would inevitably make poor colonists for the region.[261]

Understandably, in the Irkutsk press characterisations of settlers were often reminiscent of traditional images of the *narod,* even though this was somewhat different to the notion of an ideal colonist. An 1883 article by the Tobolsk native and Populist-leaning writer Nikolai Ivanovich Naumov (1838-1901) depicted a family of migrants, "'settlers', or '*novosely*', as they are called in Siberia... travelling from Russia to seek in Siberia the happiness of which fate has deprived these good people in their homeland." [262] Naumov's characterisation contained many of the tropes associated with Romantic views of the Russian peasant; poverty, piety, naivety and a resigned acceptance of their fate:

> On the dirt road which runs towards the town of A-k, a cart was slowly dragged by a rusted horse, legs barely moving in the deep dust of the parched earth. A pathetic rope harness joined the horse

[260] "Pereseleniyakh v Sibir'," p.1.
[261] Ch., "Amurskiie Pereselentsi," p.2.
[262] N. Naumov, "Rokovaya Vstrecha," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, April 14, 1883, №.15, p.9.

> to a dilapidated cart covered in a canvas full of holes, in which... its owner's possessions were stored. He belonged to the majority of people whose fate in the light of God contains not material goods, but simply the edifying advice 'suffer, endure, and hope for the best!'[263]

Naumov was no regionalist, despite being a friend of famed proponents like Yadrintsev and G.N. Potanin. His imagery was reminiscent of the 'grey' peasant outlined by Cathy Frierson, as mentioned above. Naumov combined the traditional, unambiguous goodness of the *narod* with the more pessimistic 'realism' of the late 1870s. Frames of reference for exploiter and exploited were highly unstable in the fluid space of Irkutsk province. Naumov's peasant characters, "haggard people stupefied by chronic hunger and suffering", certainly fitted that description.[264] Their plight, he said "would awaken even the callous, hardened with selfish instincts, at the sight of the miserable rags barely covering the nakedness of these travellers."[265]

However, he believed it was their callow naivety that would be their undoing. Perhaps reflecting his lack of regionalist fervour, Naumov's Ryazan peasants fell afoul of a *Sibiriak* who emerged symbolically from the dark taiga. The character and physique of this canny wild man of nature, "tall and powerfully built" with "big black eyes" and "the black, dishevelled locks of his beard falling on his half naked breast" was used by Naumov as a stark counterpoint to his characterisation of the fundamental goodness of the "ingenuous *novosely*... fuelled during their journey by the name of Christ, used to meeting with derision from the natives and wondrously disguised contempt, instinctively feeling their humility and alienation."[266] Complaints similar to Naumov's about the lack of morals among the *starozhily* had been raised three years previously in *Sibir'*, when one correspondent wrote in a tone of disgust that "Only one

[263] Ibid.
[264] Ibid
[265] Ibid.
[266] Ibid.

benevolent Siberian peasant supplies these settlers (*pereselentsi*) with his own philanthropy (*blagotvoritel'nost'yu*) and gives them alms."[267]

However, the *starozhily* were often characterised in similar terms. Showing the portability of these images, Shchapov's regionalist sensibilities were affronted when he encountered people akin to the timorous 'grey' peasant among the supposedly indomitable *Sibiriakii* of his ancestral homeland. He claimed it was common

> to see some poor peasant, miserable, in acute need of ten or twenty roubles to pay his taxes, repair his hut, or buy bricks or a few pounds of salt, etc., show servile deference and bow and scrape before Ageem Ageyham, some bourgeois capitalist on the Lena, to beg for compassion from his hidebound, cruel heart and ask for these ten or twenty roubles, though under conditions so onerous as to have to pay back grain for between twenty and thirty roubles, or perhaps even work ten days at harvest, etc.[268]

Most pertinently in the context of Siberian colonisation, in this characterisation the peasant was either a passive victim or, worse still, had reverted back to his supposedly primitive animalist instincts: "In either game, he lost his consciousness, his peasantness, his humanity, and therefore his potential as a positive element in Russia's cultural progress." [269] Such a character would not have been deemed suitable to carry out the 'civilising mission' demanded by the empire's imperial posturing.

International discursive networks of imperialism certainly had an influence on Russian colonial places. Whilst the frames of reference used to produce images of the *novosely* owed a great debt to the peasant question, it would be misleading to underplay the international, comparative aspect to this debate.

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[267] 'Priyuti Dlya Pereselentsev', *Sibir'* (Irkutsk, 17 February 1880), №7, p.1.
[268] Shchapov, "Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya I Russko-Krestyanskaia Obschina," p.122.
[269] Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, p.118.

The influential P.P. Semenov-Tian-Shanskii equated Russian colonisation to the overseas "colonising movement of the European race."[270] Moreover, many observers saw little or no difference between the trans-continental journey of the Russian peasant on the "dry route" (*sukhim putem*), "that went on and on without end" and the sea voyages undertaken by colonists of other nations.[271] An 1883 article in *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* equated the seemingly intractable problem of financing peasant settlers to "the Australian 'squatters' (*skvatteri*) ... the rich drovers who own of huge flocks of sheep... In order to become a squatter, one must have capital, which is why the disadvantaged poor that move to Australia have to start with cash. Consequently, emigration is often delayed."[272] The article also drew comparisons with "the American 'squatter-pioneers'" (*skvatterami-pionerami*) who needed less capital investment, with the result that "only 250 000 have moved to Australia, whereas 400 000 move annually to America."[273] There were also calls from *Sibir'* for the establishment of a Siberian version of Castle Garden, the immigration station in Manhattan that predated Ellis Island and had "created a civilisation" in its processing of eight million migrants between 1855 and 1900.[274] Another contributor complained that the abysmal conditions of peasants on their journey "resembles a transport carrying 'negroes' (*'negrov'*) across the Ocean, rather than the journey of free people to their America."[275] For his part, A.A. Kaufman disagreed entirely with Semenov-Tian-Shanskii's equation of Russian and European migration. Like the aforementioned *Irkutyani*, he saw much grander parallels in the Manifest Destiny of the USA which he characterised as "analogous in character, though even greater in scale" to the "distinctly Russian phenomenon" of resettlement.[276] That Siberian observers engaged

[270] P.P. Semenov Tian-Shanskii, 'Znachenie Rossii i kolonizatsionnom dvizhenii Evropeiskikh narodov', *I.I.R.G.O.*, 1892, vol. 28, №4, pp.358, 353, quoted in Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, pp.195-6.
[271] Ch., "Amurskiie Pereselentsi," p.2.
[272] I_v, "Vopros O Ssil'nikh v Avstralii," p.8.
[273] Ibid.
[274] "Priyuti Dlya Pereselentsev," p.1.
[275] "Katastrofa Na Pereselencheskom Puti," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, July 7, 1883, №,27, p.2.
[276] A.A. Kaufman, 'Pereseneliia', in F.A. Brokgowz and L.A. Efron (eds), *Entsiklopedicheskii Slovor'* (St Petersburg, 1948), vol. 23, p.265, quoted in Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, p.195.

with these debates, and compared and contrasted the problems of other states and empires to their own, shows a willingness to see the Russian Empire within the narrative of Great Power imperialism.

Once the Russian peasant had arrived in Siberia or beyond, transformed into an emaciated 'colonist' along the way, he, his family, and possibly his entire village had to attempt to forge an existence in a new land. This was partially achieved through the provision of state subsidies, a topic of great interest to observers of the peasantry among the Irkutsk cultural class. An article in *Sibirskie Voprosui* by O. Shkapskii provided a statistical comparison of the needs of settlers coming to Siberia with the grants made to them from the beginning of the settlement of the Amur in 1863 up to the issuance of the "free settlement" regulations on 13th May 1906. Shkapskii found that "establishing a homestead" (*domoobzavodstvo*) required about two hundred roubles, which included six months of food reserves. However, he also discovered that of the 90.7% who required financial aid, "the overwhelming majority of settlers received a loan of between 50 and 100 roubles" which caused some 43.8% to begin their new life in debt.[277] Although he recognised that insufficient state subsidies were contributing to the "decomposition" (*razlozheniya*) of new settlements, the regionalist historian P.M. Golovachev was aggrieved at the "unusual perks and lavish financial support" given to migrants, believing that they artificially insulated those who may not have been able to survive in Siberia.[278] This fear of incubating the weak and unfit tallied with anxieties expressed in the wider context of the debate on whether welfare provision for urban, rural and native poor was Christian benevolence or sustaining the weak and degenerate against the laws of nature.[279]

[277] O. Shkapskii, "Ssudnaya Pomosch Pereselentsam," *Sibirskie Voprosui* 3, №13 (1907), p.22. The average amount owed was 24.9 roubles, or 163.8% of net income per capita.
[278] P. Golovachev, "Trevozhnie Voprosi," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №1 (1907), p.4.
[279] J. Harris, 'Between civic virtue and Social Darwinism: The concept of the residuum', pp.67-88 in David Englander and Rosemary O'Day (eds), *Retrieved Riches: Social Investigation in Britain, 1840-1914* (Aldershot, 1995).

That being said, there were certainly many positive characterisations of productive *novosely*. One such example was provided by P. Ivanov in an 1894 article from *Sibirskii Sbornik*. It detailed a character called 'Pasha *the khokhol*', a runaway peasant who ended up in Novgulskii village, Irkutsk province.[280] The image projected was of Pasha as an impossibly perfect peasant who works tirelessly, selflessly serves his community, is respectful of women and has no vices; "he did not even dabble with such things as tobacco, believing it to be devilish poison. He drank vodka only when at a party, and then only a little."[281] This characterisation echoes the romanticised *narod* of the 1860s, an image which endured in artistic and literary circles in spite of the growth of anthropological and scientific approaches to peasant studies. Pasha managed to project both the wisdom of a wrinkled, greybeard elder and childlike merriment. He had been assigned to live with the widow Oriny upon his release. Her farm

> was in brilliant condition through the untiring work of Pasha the *khokhol'*. The grain barn was full to bursting, the horses were healthy, there were four cows, and the pigs were so fat they could barely get out of the mud. Pasha liked to keep the cattle in good condition... Pasha did not know the fatigue of work and loved nothing more than working 'to the ends of his hands'.[282]

Even though Pasha identified himself as a "*raseyskie*" [*rossiiskii*] outsider, his story of fleeing serfdom and joining an already prosperous *starozhily* village is perhaps indicative of the regionalist sympathies of his creator.

Despite growing familiarity with the brutalising effects of peasant migration by road and rail, the notion of a civilising *novosely* endured up to and beyond 1917, in tandem with their counterpoint, the supposedly "movingly innocent

[280] *Khokhol* is a somewhat demeaning term for a Ukrainian, originating in the name of a traditional Cossack hairstyle.
[281] P. Ivanov, "Na Polyanke (Kartinka S Naturi)," *Sibirskii Sbornik*, №5-6 (1894), p.49.
[282] Ibid., p.48.

or hopelessly retarded" *starozhily*.[283] As mentioned above, the regionalists unsurprisingly fomented a backlash against these ideas. In spite of the pro-resettlement views of its proprietor, in 1891 Yadrintsev's *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* denounced the "increasing claims about benefits for the *Sibiriakii*" from colonisation, claiming that "all conclusions about the importance of the settlers' culturally instructive influence are merely theoretical abstractions based on various assumptions about the positive qualities of the settlers and the backward, disadvantaged *Sibiriakii*." [284] The author bolstered their argument by quoting the non-regionalist peasant expert A.A. Kaufman, who noted that in his research, the *novosely* had been "completely assimilated (*assimilirovalis'*) in an agricultural sense, by the '*Sibiriakii*': they have learned [to use] Siberian tools and cropping methods."[285] However, Kaufman did not proclaim either peasant was intrinsically superior. Instead, he believed that "The influence of the settler element... was purely mechanical. With the influx (*naplivom*) of settlers, the economic order has been changed not through their personal desires or qualities, but simply because a thousand households cannot continue to manage in the same way as three hundred."[286] Kaufman continued that whilst assimilation was based on the excellent yields produced by *starozhily* techniques, this was not due to any skill on their part as "Any form of agriculture... under such conditions, is the best of all possible forms."[287] *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* printed a more strident refutation of the supposed superiority of the *novosely* in September of the same year. Following "extensive statistical and economic research on the life of peasants in Siberia," the newspaper found that

> not only did they [the *novosely*] not teach them [the *starozhily*] anything, they even learned from them. Therefore, the impact of the settler element, in the sense of raising the technical level of

[283] Yuri Slezkine, "Savage Christians or Unorthodox Russians? The Missionary Dilemma in Siberia", pp.15-39, in Diment and Slezkine (eds), *Between Heaven and Hell*, p.15.
[284] "Sposobny-Li Sibiryaki," p.1.
[285] Ibid., p.3.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Ibid.

> [Siberian] agriculture cannot be considered... The most intensive, the most appropriate rural progress of economic forms is found in those areas which have 'remained entirely free from any influence of the settler element.'[288]

The editorial then rounded on European Russian writers for what was perceived as the constant bombardment of exaggeratedly positive views of the new settlers in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary:

> This passion [of European Russian commentators] regarding ... the 'ox patience', the 'endurance', the 'ability to be content with little' - is a new type of Populism. They resemble those Populists whom Vladimir Solov'ev called worshippers of idols, all exalting and extolling the new settler who has experienced severe hardships in life, and is elevated to the ideal as an example to the Siberian peasant, although there is no doubt that in all of these qualities the *novosely* still have a long, long way to go to equal the living embodiment of this ideal, the Chinese coolies.[289]

The complaint from the Irkutsk cultural class, therefore, was that new settlers were not naturally gifted at adapting to new conditions, yet were certainly more suited to that than to being the vibrant, transformative catalyst they were often portrayed as. W. Bruce Lincoln has stated that in many ways this inflexibility was intentional; the *novosely* came in such numbers and with enough confidence that they felt no need to alter anything, but simply wished to recreate their old way of life in a new land.[290] This was encouraged by a state that seemingly sought the transformation of Siberia informed more by theoretical models than practical concerns. This criticism had been brought to the surface at the start of the twentieth century when perceived land shortages in Siberia meant that the government switched its focus to taiga

[288] "Materiali dyla nauchenia buyta krest'yan Zapadnoi Sibiri", III, p.27, quoted in "K *Voprosu o Vliyany Pereselentsev*," p. 4.
[289] Ibid., p.3.
[290] Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent*, p.284.

settlement in heavily forested provinces like Irkutsk. Writing for *Sibirskie Voprosui* in 1905, A.A. Kaufman surely pleased its *Irkutyan* proprietor V.P. Sukachev when, after thirty years of statistical analysis and pseudo-scientific arguments for the reinvigorating power of the *novosely*, he replaced the *Sibiriak* on his pedestal. Like Golovachev, Kaufman did this by ridiculing what he perceived as the moral and physical weakness of the modern European Russian peasant:

> The problem is that by no means every migrant is capable of being a taiga pioneer. First of all, the current migrant, petitioning for permission, expecting 'cheap fares' and state grants, has little in common with the former pioneer coloniser, who left despite the 'strong force' [serfdom] and every kind of prohibition, who did not hesitate in the face of weeks of cold, and fixedly knew that he could rely on no one but God and his own self.[291]

The longevity of this viewpoint can be seen by returning to the pages of *Sibir'* in October 1877, whereon a front page editorial avouched similar ideas of the stagnation and unsuitability for colonisation of freed serfs from west of the Urals:

> The absence of colonisation has fostered in the [European Russian peasant] population stagnation, quiescence, a lack of enterprise, an inability to adjust to a change in living conditions, retarded industrial and economic life, and created an uneven distribution of people. In short, it has given rise to those symptoms in the social organism which can be characterised by a lack of proper circulation and stagnation of the blood. This delayed resettlement had an impact on the mindset of all of Russian society; the sedate character of the Russian *narod* is not particularly favourable to the

[291] A. Kaufman, "Kolonizatsiya Sibiri v Eya Nastoyaschem e Buduschem," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, 1905, №8, p.186.

> maintenance and development of sparsely populated regions like Siberia.[292]

The difference was that Kaufman, reflecting forty years of peasant studies, was more aware of the diversity of the Russian peasantry, and so more willing to accept agricultural variation. Reflecting once again the environmental possibilist approach and his belief in the inadaptability of the Russian peasant, Kaufman remarked that

> it has been widely recognised that the only practical and feasible method for [taiga] colonisation was a way of life in itself, free settlement by individual pioneers… Steppe-settlers, generally southerners, are obviously unfit for taiga colonisation…the ideal colonists would be, of course, natives of the north-eastern provinces, the ancestral pioneers of Siberia (*iskonnuie pionerui Sibiri*).[293]

He also extended this praise to "those woodsmen par excellence", the Lithuanians, Byelorussians and Baltic peoples who seemingly as a precondition of success had their "distinctive national homogeneity" subsumed by their new neighbours.[294] This is a subtle difference from his views on the assimilation of Great Russian peasants which betrays a degree of Russian chauvinism. Whilst Kaufman felt that both Great Russian settlers and these non-Russian woodsmen had been "assimilated", the latter had been completely absorbed into the Russian-Siberian peasant grouping, whilst it was explicitly stated that the Russian *novosely* had only altered their farming practices. Continuing the theme of inadaptability, a 1907 article from *Sibirskie Voprosui* concluded that "Settlers in Siberia often find themselves in conditions dissimilar to those in which they ran their farms at home, and they take a long time to adapt to them…[or] find themselves completely unable to come to terms with it."[295]

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[292] "*Kolonizatsiya* I Ee Znachenie," p.2.
[293] Kaufman, "Kolonizatsiya Sibiri," pp.182, 197.
[294] Ibid. It is perhaps significant that none of these are 'Great Russian' peoples.
[295] "Itogi Pereselencheskogo Dvizheniia," p.24.

Likewise, P.P. Semenov Tian-Shanskii claimed that there was a "5-10% attrition rate" among new settlers, which he put down to their inability to adapt; "the weakest organisms (*organizmi*) died, especially children, from a sudden change in living conditions. [However,] children who were born in the new places survived well." [296] These arguments of fundamental inadaptability represent a significant divergence from the widespread conception of the Russian peasant as the "colonist *par excellence*" (*kolonist po preimushchestvu*). [297] Another aspect of the supposed unsuitability of the European Russian peasantry to Siberian settlement was the worrying phenomenon of reverse migration (*obratnoe pereseleniie*). [298] As with the furore surrounding peasant loans, this debate was awash with scientific analysis and statistics regarding origins, funds and the availability of land. [299] Whilst making allowances for land shortage and a lack of clear information for peasants, Kaufman was also quick to point out that "not every case of reverse migration indicates the actual impossibility of settling, or the difficulties of settlement arising from consistent local challenges," but rather a significant proportion of returns were "people who came, looked around, and went back". [300]

The peasant commune in Irkutsk province

Any attempt at economic modernisation and the creation of a more 'rational' peasant society in Irkutsk province inevitably had to engage with the peasant commune (*selskoe obshchestvo* or *mir*'). The commune was a central tenet of the myth of the *narod*. Slavophiles and Populists viewed it as evidence of the uniquely communal and egalitarian outlook of the Russian peasantry, an

[296] Semenov, "Znachenie Rossii v Kolonizatsionnom Dvizhenii Evropeyskih Narodov," p.366.
[297] Geraci, *Window on the East*, p.x.
[298] Anon., 'Itogi Pereselencheskogo Dvizheniia', p.22.
[299] See for example Kaufman, "*Kolonizatsiya* Sibiri"; Ch., "Iskusstvennoe Sozdanie Agrarnogo Voprosa v Sibiri."
[300] Kaufman, "*Kolonizatsiya* Sibiri," pp.193-4.

expression of their innate self-sacrifice and unity. Marxists, especially the Mensheviks, saw in it a kind of proto-socialism, whilst liberals believed it was a force for oppression that held back the development of the empire and its people, especially after it was reinforced by the government as part of the emancipation edict.[301] The rapid social change engendered by emancipation, combined with new ways of interpreting the world like Social Darwinism and material determinism, often produced very negative projections for the future prospects of the *narod*. As a reaction against the greater recognition of peasants as individuals with at least some legal privileges, many observers gravitated towards traditional, Slavophile conceptions of peasant life that stressed harmony, submissiveness and oneness. The role of the peasant commune was central to these views. Cathy Frierson has characterised this figure as the "communal peasant", and cited the Slavophile journalist and writer Sergei Aksakov as having provided a definitive characterisation: "The *narod* is made up of separate entities, each of whom has his own rational life, activity and freedom; each of them, taken separately, is not the *narod*, but together they make up that integral phenomenon, that new character who is called the *narod* and in whom all separate individuals vanish." [302]

In such conceptions, peasants would be evaluated in relation to how much of this moral, self-sacrificing communal spirit they possessed, as manifested in corresponding personal characteristics such as Christian patience and "passive endurance" of the suffering that was deemed a prerequisite of their existence.[303] Such a strong focus on culture made these ideas an awkward fit

[301] The literature on the peasant commune is too vast to review here. Some of the most insightful works include David Moon, *The Russian Peasantry 1600-1930: The World the Peasants Made* (London, 1999); Dorothy Atkinson, *The End of the Russian Land Commune, 1905-1930* (Stanford, 1983); Roger P. Bartlett (ed.), *Land Commune and Peasant Community in Russia: Communal Forms in Imperial and Early Soviet Society*, Studies in Russia and East Europe (Basingstoke, 1990); Chulos, *Converging Worlds*; Ben Eklof, John Bushnell, and Larisa Georgievna Zakharova (eds), *Russia's Great Reforms, 1855-1881* (Bloomington, 1994); Gaudin, *Ruling Peasants*; David A. J. Macey, *Government and Peasant in Russia, 1861-1906: The Prehistory of the Stolypin Reforms*, Studies of the Harriman Institute, Columbia University (Dekalb, 1987); Christine D. Worobec, *Peasant Russia: Family and Community in the Post-Emancipation Period*, Revised edition (DeKalb, 1995).

[302] Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, p.35.

[303] Ibid.

in a cultural climate that set great store by the empirical rigour of social and biological science. Darwinian theories of survival were therefore adapted to focus on the commune, rather than the individuals within, as the base unit of investigation. Communal voting, economic competition and other behaviour seen as deviating from the peasant norm were attributed to corrupting outside influences such as "emancipation, migration, the influence of urban culture, the rise of a money economy, demographic changes, land reform, or revolution."[304] However, in her study of peasant engagement with local courts, Corinne Gaudin found evidence that late imperial peasants were increasingly litigious, a sign that "village unity was fragile at best, and at most times absent."[305]

However, in 1870s Irkutsk, A.P. Shchapov presented an idealised vision of communalism in the peasant and Buriat communities of the Kudinsk-Lena region. Similar to V.F. Bulgakov's view of Siberia as a reliquary of *narod* culture, Shchapov saw the *starozhily* as the keepers of the original Russian lifeway, brought with them from European Russia and maintained by centuries of isolation in monogenic communities:

> Many times we saw in the villages of the Lena region a picture of the family labour movement in the busy summer season... Early in the morning, around three or four, father, family, elders of seventy or eighty years of age, the entire family labour *artel'* awakens. Everyone gets up and starts into the general bustle of work. The women prepare breakfast for the working family, milk cows and let them out onto the steppe pasture. They distribute a lagoon of kvass, cutlets and pies. The young *muzhiks*, the sons, harness the horses to carts, collect up the kvass, chops and pies, sickles and scythes, pitchforks, rakes, etc. And the patriarch of the peasants himself, the old father, works at the head of the *artel'* with hardly

[304] Gaudin, *Ruling Peasants*, p.11.
[305] Ibid., p.12.

> any more fuss than the young. He examines the ties, spokes and wheels of the carts, helps his sons to harness the horses, inspects all, and advises where they need to work and when. Then the whole family *artel'* goes to work in the fields until late in the evening, and the old man potters around in the courtyard, getting water for the calves, driving them out of the garden, straightening the stockade and so on.[306]

In 1905, S. Shvetsov of *Sibirskie Voprosui* described the social arrangements of the Siberian peasantry as still very much retaining this pervasive communalism. His vision was both familiarly Russian and uniquely Siberian, saying that *Sibiriak* living patterns had evolved from the traditional Russian commune into something "highly complex, encompassing not a single population, but sometimes quite substantial groups of ten or twenty whole settlements, or even more ... covering a whole parish ... so-called '*volost'* communities' (*volost'naya obshchina*) where all farmland, meadows and pasture were held in common."[307] Thirty years earlier, A.P. Shchapov felt that these *volost'* communities were in imminent danger of collapse. He described two separate types; in the first group, "agricultural communities that are particularly remote from the tract roads" he felt that there was a still a strong "communal peasant mindset", whereby

> the *muzhik* practices thrift, and most of his prosperity goes to the commune. The peasants determine a measure of natural physiological contentment sufficient for supporting the working life of a family. They are quite content, for the most part, if the family has enough manpower, if the land provides their grain for the year, and their milk, even soured, meat or beef on holidays, and sometimes (at least at Shrovetide) some butter, if there is wool from the sheep for homespun coats, clothes and socks, if there is

[306] Shchapov, "*Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaya Obschina*," p.109.
[307] S. Schvetsov, "Volostnaia Obschina I Pozemel'noe Ustroistvo," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №6 (1905) p.100.

> brick tea, [and] if there is, finally, a penny for a candle for the Mother of God or the Saviour![308]

Shchapov also believed that this way of life was imperilled by encroaching commercialisation, "bourgeois, capitalist notions, the egoistic, acquisitive greed at the expense of their fellow commune members and…the accumulation of capital."[309] This, he claimed, led to the decline of "single genus rural communities" and their replacement with "heterogeneously composed, multi-genus villages, especially trader villages, as in the area of Oeka, Kachug, etc." which displayed previously unknown, unwelcome features of economic competition such as hired labour from outside the community.[310] Shchapov narrated this loss of peasant unity through the debate surrounding the phenomenon of household division (*semeinyi razdel'*) which so concerned observers of the peasantry across the empire. For this he returned to the elders he had so lionised earlier: "Everywhere in these communities, the elders stand fast for the inseparability of the family, and are very reluctant to accept its division against the request of sons, brothers, or their wives or daughters."[311] As Cathy Frierson has shown, the idea of females disrupting the commune was common across the empire.[312] Communal division was often seen as voluntary, but there were warnings that due to the corrosive influence of capitalist society, "it is not rare to find a case where the children forcibly remove the old man from power" by exploiting the supposed peasant weakness for alcohol.[313]

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[308] Shchapov, "*Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaya Obschina*," p.112. Shchapov also points out that as the peasants in the region lived in a pre-cash economy, this was one of the rare times they dealt with actual currency.
[309] Ibid., p.109.
[310] Ibid., p.101.
[311] Ibid., p.127.
[312] See Cathy A. Frierson, "Razdel: The Peasant Family Divided," *The Russian Review* 46, №.1 (January 1987), pp.35-51 and "The Peasant Woman - Virago, Eve or Victim?" in Frierson, *Peasant Icons*. For more on the role of women as agents of change in the Russian and Buriat communities of Irkutsk province, see Chapter 4.
[313] "Eshe Pechalnoi Yavlenie Krestyanskoi Zhizni," p.3.

Tracing the decline of communal structures were not merely the preserve of rueful regionalist romanticising, but a widespread concern in Irkutsk province and the empire as a whole. Family or household divisions between sons, implying "both the fragmenting of the household as a family unit and the distribution of the movable and immovable property that belonged to the household as an economic unit" were a natural part of peasant life, and usually occurred on the death of the householder (*bolshak*).[314] However, divisions outside of this regular pattern, caused by arguments or a desire for self-betterment, became increasingly frequent in the late imperial period.[315] There were 116 229 recorded splits across forty-three provinces in the 1860s, rising to 140 355 in 1870s, and growing rapidly in the final decades of the nineteenth century.[316] Conservatives mourned the decline of patriarchal society, Populists saw it as the corruption of the peasant, liberals feared for economic stability, while Marxists welcomed it as merely another stage in the socio-economic decline of capitalism.[317] The increasing frequency of these divisions was often attributed to the debasing influence of 'modernity', whether increased peasant engagement with market forces or the exposure of naive seasonal labourers to immoral urban environments. This was seen as a factor in Irkutsk province as well. In 1885, *Sibir'* remarked that "here [in Irkutsk province], as in liberated Russia, the growing frequency of divisions [of land] and the diminution of the authority of elders in the home are noticeable." [318] Complaints in Irkutsk reflected the province's industrial development. Another contributor to *Sibir'* in the same year stated that "often the first brothers to separate are those who have, for whatever reason, become unaccustomed of peasant labour, living for too long on outside work as coachmen, in the mines, etc." [319] The railroad also drew peasants and exiles as labourers, which

[314] Frierson, "Razdel," p.38.
[315] Ibid., p.38.
[316] Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del, Zemskii otdel, *Zakonodatel'nye materialy po voprosam otnosiashchimsia k ustroistvu sel'skogo sostoianiia*, fasc. 1, St. Petersburg, 1899, pp.88-91, quoted in Ibid., p.37.
[317] Ibid.
[318] "Eshe Pechalnoi Yavlenie Krestyanskoi Zhizni", p.3.
[319] "Krestyanskie Razdeli v Sibiri," *Sibir'*, March 24, 1885, №13-14, p.3.

apparently contributed to a labour shortage as well as communal splits. Alongside these outside factors, the notion of Siberian peasant separateness refused to go away. Having "grown up in the wild", the proud nature of the *Sibiriak* apparently often led to tempestuous family lives.[320]

This desire to control household divisions was an empire-wide phenomenon. Observers of the peasantry were extremely worried by the fact that the most common outcome was "small [i.e. nuclear] families", which "received almost universal criticism from peasants and educated observers" due to the fact that it created units with only one male of working age.[321] Even if the worst did not occur, these family units were apparently less efficient, and "The general opinion was that the inevitable outcome of family fission and the consequent diminution of peasant households was poverty caused by inadequate land or inadequate labour."[322] Just like the broader discussion of Siberian colonisation, there was widespread belief in the causal link between population and prosperity.

The diversity of opinions on the *starozhily* is further demonstrated by an 1891 article from *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* entitled 'Are the *Sibiriakii* capable of agricultural and communal progress?' which tackled accusations levelled against the native Russian-Siberian peasantry by prominent members of the metropolitan intelligentsia. It cited the famed Populist economist and statistician Professor Andrei Alekseevich Isaev's claim that the Siberian peasant was "unprofitable" (*nekhozyaystvennosti*), and that

> the bumbling, parasitic (*penkosnimatel'sky*) character of the '*Sibiriak*' and his inability to live communally or progress

[320] Ibid.
[321] Frierson, "Razdel," p.39.
[322] Valuev Commission Report, unnumbered supplementary volumes, Appendix I, p.253; MVD, Svod zakliuchenii (1897), vol. 2, p. 241; D. I., "Zametki sem'i v Novgorodskoi gubemii," Sbornik narodnykh iuridicheskikh obychaev, vol. 2, St. Petersburg, 1900, pp.51-96; S. V. Pakhman,"Ocherk narodnykh iuridicheskikh obychaev Smolenskoi gubemii," in Sborniknarodnykh ... , vol.2, p.71; Kolesnikov, Krest'yanskoe khoziaistvo, pp.9-24. Quoted in Ibid., p.45.

> agriculturally [are] characteristics that seemingly make him incapable of economic competition [against] the settlers' strong community spirit, work ethic and familiarity with more advanced tools and agricultural methods.[323]

This negative characterisation of the Siberian peasant as lacking communal spirit represents an inversion of traditional positive perceptions of the bold, independent peasant pioneer. It was also not a view that A.P. Shchapov would have agreed with. However, another article that same year in *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* reaffirmed this notion. It reported on the government's attempts to introduce "communal ploughings" as a form of famine relief across the empire.[324] Despite the precarity of provincial agriculture, and the fact that such efforts were "familiar throughout all areas of the Russian Empire ... in Siberia, and in the Caucasus, and in European Russia", the local Irkutsk peasants were almost universally opposed, and complained about the "'burden' and 'futility' *('obremenitel'nosti' i 'bespoleznosti'*) of these ploughings."[325]

Governmental desires to standardise and optimise the socio-economic conditions of Siberia's agricultural land and inhabitants influenced plans to break up *volost'* communities in Irkutsk province and requisition plots for new settlers. A process of 'villageisation' (*poderevennogo*) of *volost'* communities was designed to divide these ill-defined, complex communal holdings into self-contained, uniform villages with clearly defined borders. There was much ambivalence and prevarication, with officials

> at once inclined to think about the dangers of the destruction of the *volost'* community, and therefore the necessity of keeping it in

[323] "Sposobny-Li Sibiryaki," p.3. The adjective *penkosnimatel'sky* does not denote parasitism in the same manner as the kulak, but rather in the sense of amateurism and ineptitude leaving them reliant on superior practitioners, in this case the *novosely*.
[324] The 1891-2 famine was one of the worst in the empire's history. Estimates of the death toll range from 300 000 to over 600 000. Richard G. Robbins, *Famine in Russia, 1891-1892: The Imperial Government Responds to a Crisis* (New York, 1975).
[325] "Neurozhai I Prodovol'stvenniya Nashi Sredstva," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, №34 (August 18, 1891), p.2.

> its present form producing whole townships, and at other times seeing the urgent need to arrest further *volost'* tenure through confiscation and endowment to each village separately.[326]

However, as the desire for agricultural prosperity and secure political control of the Russian Far East increased, the central government swung behind interventionist measures. Shvetsov quoted a State Council report which stated that "common landholdings do not correspond at all to the interests of agriculture. They are conceivable only at the lowest levels of its development."[327] He was despondent at this verdict, complaining that "Thusly our old communalism received the condemnation of our legislative institutions, and now it is tolerated only in exceptional circumstances as an evil which could not be ripped out in one go."[328]

Related to this issue of the large, parish-wide commune was the desire for effective landholding. This was not merely theoretical. As increasing numbers of new settlers arrived in the vast expanse of Siberia, concerns were raised about the amount of 'suitable' land still available. From this, the issue of land seizures came to the fore. The policy began as early as 1837 in West Siberia, when the government there began taking "up to 15 desyatins per registered soul and forming the excess land into resettlement areas."[329] Now, both the *starozhily* and the Buriats had common cause as dispossessed natives, although in practice the vast majority of land was taken from the latter. Given the relative paucity of convenient, uninhabited farmland in the heavily forested Irkutsk province, the *starozhily* gained staunch support in their struggle amongst the Irkutsk cultural class, especially the regionalists clustered around Yadrinstev's *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*. There was certainly a sense of native peasants being dispossessed and impoverished to make way for new settlers.

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[326] Schvetsov, “Volostnaia Obschina,” p.103.
[327] Ibid., p.109.
[328] Ibid.
[329] Grigor’ev, “Znachenie Zemleustroistva Dlya Naseleniya Sibiri (2),” p.74.

The narrative of dispossession was evident almost as soon as the restrictions on Siberian migration were relaxed, as can be seen from an article published in *Sibir'* in February 1887. It reported the resettlement of thirty families of peasants from Kursk to Tes', a village in Toyka *volost'*, East Siberia the previous August. The author, V. Gervasiev, wrote that the "sudden invasion of outsiders to the grasslands caused commotion and murmuring amount the locals. The worried owners of the meadows had already mown the hay. This precipitated the looting of the hay meadows and the ruin of some peasants, who asked the *volost'* board to intervene for their immediate removal".[330] Although these migrants had not received dispensation to settle, "the police captain required all the *volost'* elders to take all measures to organise the lives of those who have arrived" including granting them ownership of the stolen silage. The standoff was resolved only when the natives of Tes' village petitioned the Governor-General, who dispersed the settlers elsewhere. Gervasiev, with no hint of irony, was enraged at the passage of events: "Not amusing, eh? To expel the true owners of the land on the basis of one unsubstantiated statement by the settlers!... Now pray tell, how can this be arranged if there is not the slightest indication either of the right of ownership, or of quantity, nor of the extent of allocated land[?]"[331] To make matters worse, the state was perceived as actively dispossessing native peasants for its own ends. As part of the land survey designed to expedite the dispersal of free plots, the government passed enclosure laws on land it deemed economically or politically vital. This led to the promulgation of several statutes in Irkutsk province, such as that passed on 15th February 1894. Concerned primarily with forest land, the result of this law was, according to *Sibirskie Voprosui*, "infamous cases where entire villages that are fully integrated with their farmland, including meadows and even homesteads are, thanks to the expropriation of forests, credited to the state-owned forest reserves."[332]

[330] V. Gervasiev, "Kurskie Pereselentsi v Minuskinskom Okruge," *Sibir'*, February 22, 1887, №8, p.12.
[331] Ibid.
[332] Grigor'ev, "Znachenie Zemleustroistva Dlya Naseleniya Sibiri (2)," pp.83-4.

There was a strong sentiment among many Siberian writers that the state had decidedly thrown its lot in with the new settlers, and that their homeland would remain the perpetual 'gold mine' (*zolotnoe dno*) to be plundered for the benefit of others. Their bitterness is visible in the coverage of the "all-Siberian congress on the clearing of forest land in Siberia" held in Tobolsk in 1913. In an article entitled "Old Story" (*Staraya Istoriya*), the publishers of *Irkutskaya Gazeta* were keen to stress that they saw the conference as merely the latest incidence of the deprivation of Siberian peasants in favour of European Russian settlers;

> The aim of the congress was to find the best possible means of clearing out the forest areas '*for settlers*'... As is usually the case around here no-one was worried about the *starozhily...* This congress has once again highlighted the old phenomenon of Siberian life: neglect the interests and needs of the veteran population for the sake of the migrants. And if it they are not always neglected, then certainly they are to be addressed *after* those of the settlers.[333]

Characterisations of the *starozhily* as dispossessed natives completely overturned the traditional image of the *Sibiriak* as a pioneer agriculturalist Russifying the Asiatic wilderness. In that narrative, it was the dispossessed *inorodtsy* who, by virtue of their nomadic pastoralism, were seen by Russian observers as not using the land to its full potential, or even using it at all. This same rationale of "negative space", i.e. that supposedly underdeveloped lands are empty, shapeless spaces to be filled by progressive forces however they wish, is precisely what these advocates of the *starozhily* were arguing against.[334] Such confrontations were common features of European imperial expansion stretching back to the Ancient Roman legal doctrine of *terra*

[333] "Staraya Istoriy," *Irkutskaya Gazeta*, №6 (November 25, 1913).
[334] David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*, Post-Contemporary Interventions (Durham, 1993), p.93.

nullius.[335] This was, for example, the rationale for the British seizure of land in their first colony, Ireland.[336]

Having broken up the *volost'* communities, the state sought to further standardise landholding through the introduction of the principle of private ownership. This was an unprecedented move in the history of Siberia, as peasants there had previously held land 'in perpetuity' on a hereditary lease from the Crown. However, regionalists were again sceptical. Shkapskii characterised the Decree on the Sale of State and Crown Lands (9th November, 1906) which ordered that "all of this land is directed towards the creation of peasant small landownership" (*melkoi krest'yanskoi zemel'noi sobstvennosti*) as merely a pretext for continued dispossession of the *starozhily*, since "in the same proclamation is listed also the 'development of resettlement' on the enormous expanse of Asiatic Russia."[337] This transformation took place in the context of the wider range of reforms in seven key areas proposed by Pyotr Stolypin, who was Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior from 1906 until his assassination in 1911. Agricultural reform was the only one which he managed to implement, and even that required the use of Article 87 of the Fundamental Laws to bypass the Duma.[338] Stolypin sought to introduce ownership of individual farms, reduce the power of the commune and modernise farming techniques across the empire.[339] Like Witte's plans for peasant settlement along the railroad, this reform was predicated on the notion of both the helplessness of the peasantry to rectify their own situation, and also a vision of their perfectibility that saw their current plight as externally created rather than due to innate weaknesses. Judith Pallot has interpreted these reforms as aiming beyond functional agricultural improvement. She

[335] This theory stated there was a moral and legal justification for a supposedly 'superior' civilisation to seize land and other resources not deemed to be effectively used by a local population.
[336] D.C.B. Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (London, 2000), pp.4-5.
[337] Shkapskii, "Ssudnaya Pomosch Pereselentsam," p.16.
[338] Stolypin was thwarted in his attempts to reform local government, the courts, civil rights, workers' rights, religious toleration and workers insurance. See Peter Waldron, *Between Two Revolutions: Stolypin and the Politics of Renewal in Russia* (London, 1998).
[339] Atkinson, *The End of the Russian Land Commune, 1905-1930*, pp.56-79.

characterises them as part of the drive to form the peasantry into economically-secure citizens who also partook of state-run education programmes under the observation of data collection agencies to make them "more comprehensible and controllable [as] a precondition for their incorporation into civilised society."[340] Even if perceptions of the *narod* as incorrigible savages altered over time, the prescription was still stringent control by their supposed betters.[341]

Siberian kulaks

The debates around economic modernisation, the destruction of communalism and the commercial capabilities of the *starozhily* were crystallised in the form of another import from European Russia, the Siberian kulak. The most divisive of Frierson's nineteenth century "peasant icons" provides a useful case study in the readiness of Irkutsk-based observers, including regionalists trading on Siberian uniqueness, to assess local social change via the transfer of interpretive frameworks created in European Russia. The kulak appeared in analyses of Irkutsk peasant societies in the 1870s, mirroring European Russian trends. He may have seemed especially pertinent to Siberian observers due to the widespread consensus among contemporary Russian anthropologists like A.N. Engelgardt that "every peasant has a certain dose of kulakism (*kulachestvo*)" that had only previously been held in check by the yoke of serfdom which had never existed in Siberia.[342] The kulak was a polarising figure in Russian peasant studies. Although more widely known from Soviet propaganda, the image dates to the 1860s, with antecedents in the tavern keeper of the pre-emancipation era.[343] Cathy Frierson has outlined

[340] Judith Pallot, "The Stolypin Land Reform as 'Administrative Utopia': Images of Peasantry in Nineteenth-Century Russia", in Madhavan K. Palat (ed.), *Social Identities in Revolutionary Russia* (Houndmills, 2001), p.114.
[341] Ibid., p.116.
[342] Engelgardt, "Iz derevni XI", *Otechestvennye zapiska*, p.254 (Jan. 1881), p.411, quoted in Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, p.141.
[343]Ibid., p.143.

several key aspects of characterisations of the kulak in European Russia; the kulak as exploiter of the 'grey' peasant, the kulak as admirable individualist, and peasant ambivalence towards kulaks. He was a rich, male peasant who often hired farm labour, engaged in trade and provided loans of money or grain to his neighbours. The term literally translates as 'fist', connoting both strength and avarice. Revealingly, from the 1870s and 1880s the kulak was also known as a *miroed*, which translates as 'parasite' or 'commune eater'.[344] He was believed to be one who fed off the labour of others and so had broken the symbiotic link between agricultural work and sustenance.

The origin and rise of 'kulakism' was one of the most discussed aspects of the peasant question in the late imperial period. Cathy Frierson has characterised the kulak as a central figure in the interaction of material determinism and Social Darwinism in the Russian context.[345] The kulak was seen as the "negative metamorphosis of the true peasant" caused by the confrontation with capitalist forces that enabled him to free himself from the supposedly all-consuming task of farming. The peasant was then left with the dangerous task of confronting his own humanity: "All their life is governed by nature and their will is totally subjected to it. If their circumstances are eased in any way that frees them from the laws of nature, then they discover human will with all its dangers."[346]

One early example comes from the pages of *Sibir'* in April 1874. The story recounts the distribution of grain reserves from a store "in a certain village" in the province amidst a climate of drunkenness and corruption. Poor peasants were given less than they required to seed their land, including 'Savatii Pakhomov', who encapsulates the narrative of the good peasant brought low

[344] Gaudin, *Ruling Peasants*, p.23. Gaudin defines the *miroed* as "wealthy peasants who allegedly controlled communal resources thanks to the illiteracy, ignorance, and helplessness of their fellow villagers." For more on Soviet depictions of the kulak, see "'We Have No Kulaks Here': Peasant Luddism, Evasion and Self-Help", in Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin* (Oxford, 1999), pp.67-99.
[345] Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, p.138.
[346] Uspenskii, "Sobranie sochinenii" (Moscow, 1957), 5, 216. Quoted in Ibid., p.142.

by social change and market forces. He was "known to all for his industriousness, honesty and good nature", but due to the decline of communal solidarity, he "suffers with a huge family in dire poverty, because three years ago in the time of plague he lost all his livestock, and the horses disappeared one after the other over the three years."[347] He was refused any aid until he acquiesced to one foreman's request, "But perhaps you buy a bottle of wine. Just look, we're parched."[348] By contrast, the foremen scraped and bowed before the "wealthy Ivan Ivanovich" who departed the store with his "wagon so full with sacks of grain that the poor horse could barely move."[349] Incidents such as this had led to grain reserves in European Russia, but not Siberia, being placed under direct state control. The rationale was that many bureaucrats felt peasants were powerless against the "various parasites and kulaks (*miroedam i kulakam*) manipulating communal affairs at their own discretion and in accordance with their own interests."[350]

As the cash economy of Irkutsk province developed, the image of the Siberian kulak became increasingly villainous. An article published in the regionalist collection *Sibirskii Sbornik* in 1899 related the macabre tale of Zakhar Egorovich, a kulak based in Alekse'ev village in the Priangarskaia region. Zakhar quite literally made his money by teaming up with an escaped convict, a master counterfeiter, only to murder him in a fire when he left their hideout and got drunk in the village tavern. Finally, after several years "The tiresome voice of his conscience was silenced. Zakhar cautiously began to use the counterfeit money... Then, little by little, he turned into the Honourable Zakhar Egorovich, and lived happily ever after, receiving only good will" from his fellow peasants.[351] The author, known only as 'Dumin', described Zahkar's total domination of the village:

[347] "Obshchestvennie zapasi v nekotorom seleny -2," *Sibir'*, April 10, 1874, №41, p.2.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Ibid.
[350] "Neurozhai I Prodovol'stvenniia Nashi Sredstva," p.2.
[351] Dumin, "Bogatei (Rasskaz Iz Derevenskogo Buyta)," *Sibirskii Sbornik*, №1 (1899), p.49.

> For a hundred miles around, no-one is richer than Zakhar Egorovich. The local population works for him... In the village and *volost'* gatherings he unanimously and without challenge dispensed justice and punishment. The power of capital and ignorance, darkness and dire need in the locality unanimously afforded Zakhar the position of ruler.[352]

Whether or not the other villagers knew the source of Zakhar Egorovich's sudden wealth is not made clear. Nor did Dumin provide any kind of characterisation of the Alekse'ev peasantry; they merely provided the backdrop to the forgers' antics. What is clear is that he attributes to them the supposed peasant ambivalence towards kulak influence. This was a most unsettling notion for many outside observers. The noted agricultural scientist Alexander Nikolaevich Engelgardt's described the kulak as an aspirational figure for the tenants on his Smolensk estate. The kulak had what they desired - wealth, ready cash, respect, and as such the ability to act independently of the constraints of the commune.[353] This same ambivalence was recorded by observers in Irkutsk province, as in the tale of "the adventurer peasant (*prichstakatel-poselenets*) Efrem Nikitin, and the [native] peasant's son Alexander Golubev" in "their newly bought clothes and coats, corduroy trousers, red shirts, hats and red scarves tied at the neck and falling on the breast down to their belts, which were also new and red. Dressed up in this fashion, they proudly and smugly walked through the village, looking down at the poor, ragged peasants."[354] Although portrayed as vain and self-absorbed, "the crowd parted respectfully before them" and all followed to the tavern "like flies round honey... eager for gratuitous vodka."[355]

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[352] Ibid., p.42.
[353] Engelgardt, "Iz derevni XI", *Otechestvennye zapiska*, (Jan. 1881), p.411 quoted in Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, p.141.
[354] "Derevenskaiya Tseni s Zadatskami (Iz 'ocherkov Zhizni Prichskovikh Rabochik')," *Sibir'*, May 7, 1878, №14, p.5,
[355] Ibid.

A.P. Shchapov claimed that this ambivalence was visible also in the *starozhily* of the Kudinsk-Lena region. He described their "on the one hand, slavishly deferential, and on the other, sincerely spiteful attitude towards the parasitic rich."[356] He recounted the opinion of peasants in a remote village towards the kulak Ivan Grigore'ev, an outsider but "a long established trader-settler"; they were well aware that he made his money by exploiting others, but he also "lends us seeds for payment of grain, or some sort of rescue money for peasants - and we love him for it."[357] This morally ambivalent position of forbidding peasant traders from dealing with their fellow villagers was widely noted in Irkutsk province. In 1874, an article in *Sibir'* on the 'Rural Aristocrats' of the province noted that whilst "Most of the population of our village are peasant farmers, a minority of people are outsiders, involved in trade."[358] This notion was also instrumental in Shchapov's attempt to accommodate the contradictory concepts of peasant solidarity and the existence of acquisitive Old Siberian traders. He stated that the peasants of the Kudinsk-Lena region "clearly demonstrate an intolerance towards all kinds of upstarts (*viskochek*) in their community who seek to accumulate [wealth] through parasitic, avaricious means at the expense of the community" and so did not allow "the development of the commercial principle of exploitative trading."[359] As such, their commercial needs were catered for "not by fellow peasants, [but] those outside the communities coming in, and even foreign people. Everywhere in these communities 'traders' are Yids, or newly baptised Buriats, or Great Russian or Ukrainian exile settlers."[360]

[356] Shchapov, "Selskaiia Osedlo-Inorodcheskaia i Russko-Krestyanskaia Obschina," p.121.
[357] Ibid.
[358] "Sel'skiye Aristokraty," *Sibir'*, January 30, 1874, №31, p.3.
[359] Shchapov, "Selskaiia Osedlo-Inorodcheskaia i Russko-Krestyanskaia Obschina," p.113.
[360] Ibid., p.111.

Conclusion

The resettlement of peasants from European Russia to Siberia touched on many of the vital interests of the Russian Empire such as economic reform, social stability and imperial rivalries. Over the late imperial period, the relaxation of settlement regulations, the increased provision of state subsidies, land surveys and gradual improvements in transport links led to growing numbers of peasants crossing the Urals, which sharpened the effects of these varied issues in Siberia. Although Irkutsk province received relatively few new settlers compared to West Siberia and the Maritime Provinces, its position on the main rail and road routes to the Pacific Coast and its role as an administrative base for the Resettlement Administration ensured that its cultural class were fully engaged with the 'resettlement question'.

The 'peasant question' and the 'great resettlement movement' were often characterised as uniquely Russian phenomena, and symbolic characters like the *narod*, kulaks and 'grey' peasants informed the debate on Irkutsk's agricultural future. However, in both St Petersburg and Irkutsk province, the movement of settlers to Siberia was widely discussed in a comparative, international context under the influence of widespread literary trends such as liberalism and nationalism, and burgeoning scientific disciplines like ethnography, statistics and Social Darwinism which sought to produce a taxonomical evaluation of the worth of Irkutsk's competing peasants. The end product was often a seemingly contradictory combination of zoological innatism and economic or material determinist influences.

As a bastion of regionalist thought, the Irkutsk cultural class invested itself in the debate surrounding the relative merits and fate of the *starozhily* and *novosely*. Over the late imperial period, the long-treasured, highly romanticised image of the *starozhily* as uniquely constituted carriers of Russian culture was challenged by new theories of economic determinism and social reform which undermined the narrative of heroic colonisation. Whilst some like A.P. Shchapov were keen to stress the admirable qualities of the Siberian

peasantry, the 1870s were characterised by widespread malaise about their long-term prospects. Plans were drawn up for the fundamental transformation of communal structures, land ownership, agriculture and education. One key component of this was a growing clamour for the introduction of European Russian peasants into the region as a catalyst for social, economic and cultural change. This was to be at the expense of the established native Siberian peasantry, who were subjected to what Alexander Etkind has dubbed a drive for "internal colonisation"; a standardising, modernising drive influenced by ideological currents surrounding the edification of native peoples and 'rational' social and economic organisation.[361] However, the image of the heroic Siberian pioneer did not fade away, and many Irkutsk regionalists were quick to decry the implied inferiority of the Siberian peasantry. Their arguments were aided by the destructive hardships endured by migrant peasants and the problems many of them had in adapting to their new surroundings. The Irkutsk regionalists therefore sought to reframe the heroic image of the *starozhily* for the capitalist age as pragmatic if imperfect peasant pioneers who were equally, if not better, equipped to Russify Siberia than the new settlers.

[361] Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge, 2011).

3

Workers in Irkutsk Province

> The most numerous class (*klass'*) of population in Irkutsk are townspeople (*meshchanie*). But Irkutsk townspeople are not that which is known elsewhere by that notorious name. Everywhere, except perhaps St Petersburg, it is the most wretched, destitute class of society. While townspeople are now almost exempt from taxes, and pay less to the state than all other estates due to their underdevelopment, they have never managed to obtain a secure position anywhere. Only a few of them are engaged in handicrafts, some exist as mere pedlars. The rest, the real proletarians, do not disdain begging or living off the labour of their wives and children.[1]

This chapter looks at a section of the Irkutsk population that could be loosely categorised as 'workers' - those who were engaged in non-agricultural economic activity such as miners, railwaymen and labourers - and the environments in which they lived. It analyses competing characterisations of the working people of Irkutsk province and ties them to wider European discussions on urban living and civility. These groups were the focus of mounting political and scientific debate during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as industrialised and industrialising states sought to deal with their rapidly rising numbers, increasing political organisation and the unprecedented social change engendered by mass urbanisation. As Irkutsk grew in size, wealth and importance in this period, working people were an increasing presence in the lives of the city's cultural class and influenced their

[1] "Proletarii G. Irkutska," *Sibir'*, March 24, 1877, №17, p.1.

views of the province and its people. Investigating the evolution of these characterisations is therefore important in understanding evolving intellectual interpretations of Irkutsk province. The use of the term 'class', as opposed to 'estate' (*soslovie*), in the above quote from an 1877 editorial in *Sibir'* is one small example of how western European social concepts were understood to be relevant in the context of Irkutsk society.

It begins with an overview of the working people of Irkutsk, and the problems faced by the city's urban lower classes in this period. There follows a discussion of the two largest groups of workers - gold miners and railwaymen. Setting these views against characterisations of working people in European Russia and western Europe shows the degree of portability of the frames of reference underpinning conceptions of these groups. This is borne out by an analysis of the ways in which theories of racial degeneration, moral contagion and hooliganism that were originally created in relation to the major cities of Europe informed the perceptions and transformationist goals of Irkutsk-based observers. Moreover, there were strong parallels between the problematisation of the 'labour question' and peasant and imperial issues. However, conceptions of working people which sited fundamental social divisions along class lines were a potential source of conflict with regionalist doctrines of Siberian separateness. The chapter ends with a case study of ideas of Irkutsk's working people produced by the local branch of the Social Democrats during the 1905 Revolution. They promoted conceptions of working people that relied upon just such class-based divisions. Even though the proletariat (*proletariat*) was seen by many upper- and middle-class observers as a frightening new phenomenon tearing at the intricate social fabric of the empire, much of how they were characterised would have been familiar to observers of both peasants and imperial peoples in Russia and beyond.

The working population of Irkutsk

At the start of the late imperial period, Siberian cities were relatively small even by Russian standards, and overall the region was little touched by urban development. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the city of Irkutsk had a population of roughly 37 700 in 1861.[2] However, this had increased to just over 50 000 by 1897 and rapid migration in the first decade of the twentieth century more than doubled it again to over 100 000 by 1911. This growth was largely due to the expansion of gold mining, the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway and the increased military presence as a result of escalating imperial tensions in the Far East. In fact, the Siberian population boom of the pre-war years was disproportionately urban in comparison to the rest of the empire. Of the four million settlers who came to Siberia between 1897 and 1915, twenty percent (800 400 people) settled in urban areas, raising the regional total to 1 490 200.[3] During the same period, the empire's overall urban population rose from nine million to twenty-five million, or from ten to eighteen percent of the total population.[4] The growth of local industries that made rich men of prospectors, railwaymen, merchants and other capitalists in Irkutsk required a workforce. Although the scale was smaller, Siberian workers faced similar issues to their counterparts in St Petersburg, Moscow and Kiev such as low pay, a lack of employment rights and slum housing. In turn, Siberian municipal authorities looked westward for answers and precedents. The growth of clandestine and later legal socialist political organisations and militant labour around the turn of the century is testament to the growth of working class cognisance in Siberia. The infamous Lena gold-fields massacre of 17th April 1912 was the culmination of a steadily rising tide of working class resentment and agitation.[5]

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[2] "Tablitsa Naselenia G. Irkutska," *Izvestia Sibirskogo Otdel Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obschestvo*, vol. III, №4 (November 18, 1872) p.1.
[3] Anatole V. Baikalov, "Siberia since 1894," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 11, №32 (January 1, 1933) p.330.
[4] Michael F Hamm (ed.), *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington, 1986), p.2.
[5] For a detailed exposition of the causes, events and consequences of the massacre, see Michael Melancon, *The Lena Goldfields Massacre and the Crisis of the Late Tsarist State* (College Station, 2006).

Such developments sat uneasily with regionalist conceptions of ethnically-rooted Russian-Siberian unity.

There was no single, unified category of urban inhabitant in the Russian estate system. There were, however, several specifically 'urban' estates - honorary citizens (*pochetnii grazhdanin*), merchants (*kupechestvii*), craftsmen (*remeslennikii*), and burghers (*meshchanstvii*). There were also hereditary and personal nobility (*dvoryannii*), soldiers (*voennii*), clergy (*dukhovenstva*), foreigners (*inozemsty*), aliens (*inorodtsy*), Cossacks (*kazaki*) and "persons of miscellaneous ranks" (*raznochintsy*), with varying rights of abode depending on the circumstances.[6] However, in the late imperial period, the majority of urban inhabitants were actually peasants (*krest'yanin*), i.e. people specifically designated to the estate of rural agriculturalist.[7] Whilst resettlement had been conceived as a rural movement, Siberian urban growth was fed, as in European Russia, by peasant migration. For example, peasants constituted a third of the population of St Petersburg in 1860, rising to three quarters by 1914.[8] Although the Stolypin reforms of the early twentieth century allowed peasants to fully sever communal ties and migrate to a town or city, any child born to them was assigned to the peasant estate.[9] The population of Irkutsk was further diversified by the city's many functions; it was a trading nexus, provincial administrative centre, cultural hub, military command post, place of exile and it played a large role in the resettlement movement to the Russian Far East. An 1877 article in the city newspaper *Sibir'* characterised the situation as follows:

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[6] See Gregory L. Freeze, "The Soslovie (Estate) Paradigm and Russian Social History," *The American Historical Review* 91, №1 (February 1986) p.11. See also Charles Steinwedel, "Making Social Groups, One Person at a Time: The Identification of Individuals by Estate, Religious Confession, and Ethnicity in Late Imperial Russia," in Jane Caplan and John C. Torpey (eds), *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World* (Princeton, 2001), pp.67-82.

[7] Ronald Hingley, *Russian Writers and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd, rev. ed (London, 1977), p.108.

[8] Hamm, *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, p.51.

[9] Leopold H. Haimson, "The Problem of Social Identities in Early Twentieth Century Russia," *Slavic Review* 47, №1 (April 1, 1988) p.1.

> In Russia, townspeople are generally the original inhabitants of cities, the planters… Here, such indigenous people are barely a third of the burgher population. The rest is made up of a strange conglomeration of the sediment of all ranks and conditions. Here are retired soldiers and sailors, ruined ends, the children of officials, exiled Poles and ordinary settlers. All of them are assigned to Irkutsk simply because it is necessary to stick them somewhere.[10]

It was estimated that there was over a quarter of a million workers in Siberia at the turn of the century; "185 000 factory workers, 37 000 miners, 35 000 communications workers."[11] By 1905, the industrial output for the whole of Siberia had grown to twenty million roubles per year.[12] However, despite having the most state-owned factories in the region, Irkutsk province generated only 906 967 roubles, 34 kopeks in industrial output in 1906.[13] One of its largest concerns, the Uskolskii salt factory, saw its export markets in West Siberia and Mongolia contract sharply around the turn of the century. Overall factory production remained relatively small-scale and was centred on traditional industries like forestry and tanning.[14] As such, the employees of these factories appear to have attracted little attention or analysis as workers; rather they were observed as peasants 'corrupted' by capitalism, as seen in the previous chapter.

As Irkutsk was primarily an administrative and trading centre, the majority of the provincial working population was located beyond the capital, rather than living around factories as they did in industrialising cities like St Petersburg.

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[10] "Proletarii G. Irkutska," p.1.
[11] P. Golovachev, "Realnie Interesi Sibiri i Krayniya Leviya Partii," *Sibirskie Voprosui* vol.3, №15 (1907) p.3. 'Communications workers' were railwaymen, telegraph workers, couriers, etc.
[12] M. Sobolev, "K Voprosu o Reforme Krest'yanskogo Upravleniia v Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №5 (1905) pp.86-99.
[13] N. Skalozubov, "Sibir' i Gosudarstvennie Dokhodi," *Sibirskie Voprosui* vol.3, №18 (1907) p. 9.
[14] P. Kolotilov, "Evolyutsiya Rinkov Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui* vol.3, №24 (1907) pp.25-7.

The locally-produced 1897 provincial guidebook stated that "Irkutsk only provides and sells goods. It does not produce them, even for local consumption, let alone for export elsewhere. What crafts there are here would not satisfy such a city."[15] Even though those assigned to the peasant estate made up almost half (49.2%) of the city's population in 1875, the urban poor were frequently absent from writings on Irkutsk.[16] This was especially true of foreign and Russian travellers. One visitor who did make such a reference, the Scottish merchant Alexander Michie, proudly wore all of his bourgeois Victorian prejudices in his attitude towards the staff of his Irkutsk hotel:

> An unkempt urchin in tattered habiliments did the duty of maid-of-all-work, always in the way when not wanted, now and again disturbing the time-honoured dust of our fusty chamber by besoms and dish-cloths, but never to be found when he was required... No progress can be made till you have discovered his retreat, when the *a posteriori* argument of boot leather may be applied with good effect. This is the only form of entreaty that can impress a low Russian with respect, and one application will generally suffice.[17]

Michie's description, though brief, contains many of the tropes that elite observers often associated with the lower classes, particularly the Russian peasant; laziness, cunning, incompetence and responding only to physical coercion.[18] Dependent largely on the service industry, workers in Irkutsk city remained relatively poor. In 1882, *Sibir'* reported that

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[15] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, Ocherki Sibiri Dlya Narodnogo Chteniya, (Irkutsk, 1897), p. 11.
[16] "Naselenie Irkutskoi Guberny Za 1875 God (Velkuposh)," *Sibir'*, May 22, 1877, №21, p.6. Even though this percentage had decreased markedly by 1897 (only 24%, even when counted alongside the city's exile population), it was still a significant number, especially when combined with those in the "servants and labourers" (15%) and "artisan" (11%) categories: *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, p.9.
[17] Alexander Michie, *The Siberian Overland Route from Peking to Petersburg, through the Deserts and Steppes of Mongolia, Tartary, &c* (London, 1864), p.247.
[18] See, for example, the bumbling servants Petrushka and Selifan in Gogol's *Dead Souls*, who do little work but seem to have a knack of getting drunk and infuriating their master, the disgraced official turned conman Chichikov.

> in a city with a population of 40 000 inhabitants, the income of only 872 individuals (2.18% of the population) is higher than the necessary minimum amount to feed themselves... 10 000 people receive [the] minimum amount. For the remaining 30 000 inhabitants, their means are much less than is required to meet their basic needs. 10 000 people receive 400 roubles, another 10 000 people receive 300 roubles, some 5 000 people get around 200 roubles, and over 4 000 get around 100 roubles.[19]

In the Russian Empire as a whole, prices rose between forty and fifty percent in the decade leading up to the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, while incomes grew by only half that. Worse still, poor harvests in 1901 and 1902 saw the prices of some basic foodstuffs leap as much as two hundred percent.[20] The problem was compounded by military requisitioning during the war, which led to steep rises in the prices of "flour, sugar, candles and other essentials."[21] Even though Irkutsk was a regional trading centre with markets and bazaars selling vast amounts of (often frozen) foodstuffs, *Irkutyani* also had recurring problems obtaining decent produce. Local newspapers frequently reported on adulterated or mis-sold produce such as meat, grain and milk. The latter was subject to a frequent ruse whereby "Dealers, eyeing a large profit, contrive... to thaw frozen milk by heating it and mixing it with flour, and then selling it as fresh at the fairly high price of 60 kopeks a *chetvert'*."[22] There were belated calls for "sanitary guardianships" to monitor the food trade since "the man in the street (*obivatel'*) must make use of the foodstuffs on the market for day-to-day use, and therefore it is essential for him to know who... are the inferior producers and suppliers, or in which stores products are produced not in compliance with the minimum hygienic and

[19] M. Turginskii, "Usloviia Dlya Uluchshenioa Gigiene Derevni," *Sibir'*, February 21, 1882, №8, p.8.
[20] Henry Reichman, "The 1905 Revolution on the Siberian Railroad," *Russian Review* 47, №1 (January 1, 1988) p.28, [viewed: 12/04/2013] Available from: doi:10.2307/130442.
[21] "Nado Toropitsia (Tsarskii Mir I Gosudarstvennaya Duma)," *Sotsial'-Demokraticheskii Listok*, August 1905, №2, p.1.
[22] *Irkutsk Kopeek*, №36 (2nd November, 1910), p.1. A *chetvert'* is an imperial Russian unit of volume equivalent to 1.537 litres.

sanitary conditions."[23] However, this idea was being proposed in 1913, and even then "the organised struggle against those businesses that are hotbeds of poisoning and infection" was to proceed only on a voluntary basis.[24] These problems would have been familiar to urbanites across pre-First World War European cities. For example, employees in the teeming factories of St Petersburg worked ten to twelve hour days, and their wages could barely keep up with spiralling rent and food costs. Few earned a living wage, which was estimated at six to seven hundred roubles per year for a family.[25]

The late imperial period saw two major modern industries appear in Irkutsk province; gold mining and railway building. Following on from West Siberia in the pre-reform period, East Siberia experienced its own "gold fever" in the 1870s, concentrated on what would become the "world-renowned, rich seams of gold" of the Olekminsk-Vitemsk system in the Upper Lena region.[26] The mines drove Irkutsk's rising wealth and regional status, becoming by far the province's highest-grossing non-agricultural industry and worth thirty five million roubles per year by 1905.[27] The number of miners increased accordingly, from eight thousand at the start of the boom to thirty-seven thousand by the time of the 1897 census.[28] Few workers saw any benefit from this boom, as production quickly became concentrated in the hands of several larger firms. Many *Sibiriakii*, especially those of a regionalist bent, were disinclined towards this development, seeing it as another facet of the supposed corruption of the *starozhily* and the exploitation of their region by alien capitalist forces. The exiled Decembrist Dmitrii Irinarkhovich Zavalishin claimed that "gold mining [was] inseparable from drunkenness, debauchery

[23] O. B_a, "'Narodnoi Zdravie' (Torgovlia Sistnimi Pripasami I Gorodskaya Sanitaria)," *Irkutskaya Gazeta*, №6 (November 25, 1913) p.2.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Hamm, *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, p.50.
[26] *Izdanie Irkutskogo Peresenelcheskog Rayona, Opisanie Irkutskoy Guberny, Spravochnaiia Knizhka Dlya Khodokov i Pereselentsev* (Irkutsk: Tipo-litografiia P. Makushina I V. Posokhina, 1913), p.12.
[27] Sobolev, "K Voprosu O Reforme," p.86.
[28] Golovachev, "Realnie Interesi Sibiri i Krayniya Leviya Partii," p.3.

and crime."[29] The mines came to be seen as akin to the empire's torrid industrial slums, and Irkutsk province became the literal incarnation of the long-standing image of Siberia as a plundered gold mine, its wealth extracted and the benefits squandered elsewhere:

> some have prospered not from honest work, but from chance and dark deeds. As a result they are generating insane luxury, and the *nouveau riche* move to spend the wealth mined in Siberia in other countries... The native Siberian (*prirodniy sibiriak*) was pushed into a small billet, and the best places were taken by newcomers, large predators, acting for no-one, only for the exploitation of the people.[30]

The exiled regionalist academic A.P. Shchapov expressed similarly robust criticism of the exploitation of the Siberian miners in his 1875 article, 'What is the working people in Siberia?', which strongly echoed his criticism of the exploitative effects of capitalism on the Siberian peasantry:

> trudging along…with his calloused hands, with his powerful, friendly co-operative (*artel'*) to take the gold from the dragon Zmey; 'to dig up all the gold not for myself, nor for my poor brethren', as in the lyrics of the old Russian folk song, but also not for the working folk (*trudyashchegosya lyuda*), not for the entire Russian *narod*, not for universities or colleges for the young generations of workers to go to, not even for the sovereign's Treasury or the state. What are they doing, these hunchbacks tramping to the goldmines? It is hunger, poverty, and misery chasing working people to Egyptian servitude for the 'Lucullan and Krestovskian appetite of rapacious capitalist souls' at the expense of their own health and daily sustenance, in bondage for an

[29] D. Zavalishin, "*Kolony*, Kak Stupen' v Razvitii Chelovechestva (Okonchanie)," *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, June 30, 1883, №26, p.10.
[30] Ibid.

advance or a portion of their wages far disproportionate to the burden of work.[31]

The Irkutsk miners should have had a measure of protection from this exploitation, as under imperial law a third 'rebellion' (*bunt*) meant that the offending mine would revert back to Treasury control. However, according to the regionalist, anti-mining line of *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, "the confiscation of mines [was] rare, almost unheard of" in Irkutsk province, while “cabals” of officials and capitalists perpetrated “all sorts of harassment of workers to which the Siberian population has become accustomed in the goldfields."[32] They also claimed to have seen witness statements made by workers striking near Nikolskii village on the South Ussuri line, where men were "bound to the contractor under such conditions that they would seek to break free at the slightest opportunity."[33] Although miners and railwaymen were paid cash wages, these were often desultory and the isolation of the mines meant that diet and accommodation were largely in the hands of their employers. The men claimed that they "received rotten meat and bread that the Nikolskii pigs would not eat!" and that "the clerks were drunk, offended the workers, demanded overtime, assigned the vodka rations to the salesmen and did not give the workers any, and threatened the workers with revolvers in any dispute."[34] Such was their destitution that in the leaked report, a foreman likened the “hundreds of impoverished workers” on the South-Ussuri railway to the “barefoot command” (*bosaya komanda*), the name given to bereft prisoners who had sold their state-issued uniform for a few kopeks to spend on food, gambling or alcohol.[35]

The advent of the Trans-Siberian Railway in 1890 scattered thousands of new workers along its projected path, both prisoners and free men. It was a colossal

[31] Quoted in V.G., “Na Zare Sibirskoy Pechati,” *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №. 3 (1906) p.100. Zmey is a dragon from Slavic mythology, often depicted guarding a hoard of gold.
[32] “Podryadchiki i Rabochie”, *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, №33 (August 11, 1891) p.2.
[33] Ibid., p.1.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

economic enterprise and the anticipated route measured almost six thousand miles. However, workers were highly concentrated in just twenty-five workshops along the line. These employed 57 881 people, with another 35 667 on the Transbaikal branch. The Irkutsk depot employed around nine hundred workers.[36] The majority of railwaymen were unskilled European Russians from the peasant estate; in 1903 only 16% of the workforce was native Russian-Siberian, while 7.7% were criminal exiles.[37] Migrant workers were enticed with better wages than they could earn in western Russia, and rates of pay generally rose the further east one went. However, conditions were abysmal. There were chronic shortages of adequate winter housing and clothing to offset the harsh climate, and the failure to extend the nascent industrial inspectorate to Siberia meant that the work was extremely hazardous. In their haste to build the Trans-Siberian, the tsarist government had "large contracts drawn up [with private firms] ... where the dismissal of contractors leads to a large penalty," something the cash-strapped autocracy was obviously keen to avoid.[38] Moreover, the project was funded by large loans floated on the Paris Bourse, so completed contracts were also important to avoid mutually ruinous defaults that could jeopardise the nascent Franco-Russian Alliance of 1892. The terms of these contracts were highly disadvantageous for workers. For instance, railwaymen, unlike gold miners, were not afforded the protection of the 'three strikes' rule mentioned above. *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* reported that this meant that "Workers [have] nowhere to turn for assistance, there is no government authority that could listen to their statements and is strongly committed to ensuring that this merciless exploitation is stopped."[39] In this way, engaging with international finance networks placed limits on autocratic power and had a direct impact on the empire's workers. This pattern was repeated with the circum-Baikal line and the Chinese Eastern Railway, the funding of which was widely criticised as another chapter in "the old story of embezzlement of

[36] Reichman, “The 1905 Revolution on the Siberian Railroad,” p.27.
[37] Ibid., p.28. Of the total labour force, only 15% were skilled craftsmen.
[38] “Podryadchiki i Rabochie”, p.1.
[39] Ibid, p.2.

Treasury funds ... a new and unnecessary burden on the backs of the Russian people.[40]

This combination of atrocious working conditions and the growing concentration of labour in large workshops made the Trans-Siberian "a special hotbed of labour unrest."[41] Rising discontent translated into increasingly frequent industrial disputes. The Social Democrats reported forty-eight disturbances across the Russian railway network from 1870 to 1895, with another fifty-three from 1898 to 1905. Whilst the majority of these were spontaneous, political agitators actively cultivated links across the line. The Social Democrats organised their first Siberian railway strike in Krasnoyarsk in 1901. The railwaymen "generally accepted the leadership of the militant Social Democratic underground" in industrial matters, even though their demands - better pay, shorter hours and improved conditions - were much more economic than political.[42] The first major strike in Irkutsk was in 1899, with a much larger successor in 1902. In seeking to help their readers understand the seemingly intractable cycle of industrial disputes occurring on the region's nascent railroad, *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, noted that "In the area of new-build railroads, we are faced with the same methods used in respect of workers in the gold mining industry, and it is clear that equal causes and effects are also involved".[43] The cycle was described as follows: “the workers are driven to despair, organise a strike, and refuse to cooperate. The railroad bosses write about the ‘rebellion’ and request the intervention of the military to compel them to work."[44]

Rising working-class discontent, and the use of troops to suppress strikes, was certainly not unique to Russia. In the years preceding the First World War, British society, often propagandised as a bastion of unity and peaceful change,

[40] Mikhail Ivanov, “Novoe Pokushenie Na Narodniy Karman’ (poslednuy Etap "Kolonial’noy Politiki),” *Sibirskie Voprosui* 2, №6 (1906), p.63.
[41] Reichman, p.25.
[42] Ibid., p.26.
[43] “Podryadchiki i Rabochie,” p.1.
[44] Ibid.

was beset by social discord. A combination of inflation and falling wages appreciably lowered living standards, whilst the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party empowered workers on a national level. The Tonypandy riots of November 1910 saw Home Secretary Winston Churchill dispatch troops to quell the rebellious miners, one of whom died from injuries inflicted in the crackdown. This was followed by the Liverpool dockers' strike of summer 1911, which saw two deaths. However, the scale of the national coal strike of 1912 led the Liberal government to take a different approach, as the matter was peacefully resolved by the passage of the Coal Mines (Minimum Wage) Act 1912, just as the escalation of the 'Irish Question' threatened to tip the country into civil war.

Workers' education

In Irkutsk, proposals to improve living and working conditions, such as the mooted factory inspectorate, were familiarly paternal. This approach was underpinned by recycled views of lower-class people as benighted children. These would have been recognisable to observers of the peasantry and urban workforce of European Russia. It is also visible in the only criticism the reporter from *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* made of the Nikolskii railwaymen, when he chastised them for fabricating unbelievable lies: "Who would really believe that the workers would display such childlike, naive (*detskiy-naivniy*) behaviour in claiming that the clerks drank the vodka ration assigned to *two hundred people*."[45] This is reaffirmed by the author's closing argument that "The heads of the Siberian railway construction project should remember that their task is to lay the path through the deserts and jungles of different cultures, rather than intoxicating and enslaving" workers and aliens.[46]

[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

These paternal characterisations and methods ran through discussions of potential schemes for the 'improvement' of the Irkutsk workers. One of the most commonly proposed solutions was education. The cultural class of Irkutsk was keen to stress how far ahead of other Siberian cities they were in this regard: "The city of Irkutsk has a number of schools educating the inhabitants, which costs quite a lot compared to other Siberian cities. Up to ¾ of the male inhabitants are literate. In the city there are 20 different schools for males and 7 for females. There are 1 300 male students, and 600 female."[47] The growing number of gymnasia, secondary schools and technical institutions mentioned in Chapter 2 would have been largely off-limits to the city's poorest. Universal schooling was not introduced to Irkutsk until 1913, and so civil society attempted to fill this void through such institutions as The Society for Public Readings, The Society for the Establishment of Popular Education in Irkutsk and Irkutsk City (later Irkutsk People's University), and The Brotherhood of St Innocent.[48] The latter focused on religious-moral teachings, and was linked to the far right Union of Russian People. It was less popular than the others, reflecting Jeffrey Brooks' assertion in relation to European Russia that urban workers tended to be more literate and have a greater preference for secular material than peasants who remained in the village.[49] The Society for Public Readings was formed before the promulgation of the October Manifesto and received over a thousand roubles per year from the municipal government. It tried to blend traditional moral edification with modern, scientific teaching, "providing amusement, reading folk tales and innocent stories, and outlining the course of social development according to the deeply scientific work of [the historian Dmitrii Ivanovich] Illovaiskii under the influence of the spirit of the time."[50] Before being shut down on 8th March 1908 for its supposedly transgressive teachings, the society "repeatedly arranged music and literary

[47] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, p.43.
[48] A. Chernov, "Kulturnaya Rabota v Irkutskte," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №21-2 (1908) p.30.
[49] Jeffrey Brooks, "Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era", in William Mills Todd and Robert L. Belknap (eds), *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800-1914* (Stanford, 1978), pp.120-1.
[50] Chernov, "Kulturnaya Rabota v Irkutskte," p.31. Illovaiskii is most famous for his 'anti-Normanist' stance, which denied the legendary Varangian founding myth of the Kievan *Rus'*.

mornings, concerts [and] dance evenings, where for a few pence the audience could hear opera singers of the city theatre, music and readings from fictional works. The public attended with pleasure not only these parties and concerts, but also the popular readings".[51]

For its part, the Society for the Establishment of Popular Education in Irkutsk and Irkutsk City ran six auditoria across the city, delivering programmes of lectures on Russian literature, Geography and the history of Siberia. It also opened a public library and reading rooms. The Society recorded 6 838 visitors in 1907, up from 4 248 in 1904.[52] Its chairman, Petr Nikolaevich Zhdanov, said his society's aim was the "democratisation of education" modelled on those "societies for public universities [that] have emerged in Moscow, St Petersburg and other cities". However, following their initial run, "The only thing that saddened the founders was the complete absence of the so-called 'grey' public ('*seroi' publiki*), but this phenomenon was soon explained by the high cost of admission [27 kopeks] and lack of publicity."[53] Zhdanov promised, however, that "the society would undertake all measures to force down the price", so that "public education courses are available not only in name but also in practice."[54] This image of an indistinct 'grey' public is a clear parallel to not only narratives of a dull, shapeless *narod*, but also the 'dark' urban masses of the European industrial metropolis. There is an echo of such views in the kind of education these societies wished to pursue. An employee called Tretyakov observed that

> Watching the children and their work in the library, we found that a large percentage of visitors had not yet risen to the level of independent reading, which is not very productive for them. It

[51] S. Beldeninov, "Sud'ba 'Kramolnogo' Obschestva v Irkutske," *Sibirskie Voprosui* 3,.№8 (1907): p.106.
[52] Chernov, "Kulturnaya Rabota v Irkutskte," p.31.
[53] Ibid., p.35.
[54] Ibid., p.36. Between November 1907 and April 1908, the audience demographic (averaging 315 attendees per lecture) broke down as follows: (1) students (2) professionals (3) "the so-called working people" (4) bourgeoisie (5) unknown (6) working class (*rabochie klass*).

> turns out that children do not need so much in the way of abstract, bookish knowledge, but in education, in physical, mental and moral development.[55]

The existence of these societies, and their belief that the urban masses needed moral instruction above all else, is a clear example of a 'western'-style association pursuing typically narrow, paternal aims. Concerns over the comportment of the urban working class were common to Great Power societies both at home and in colonial settings. The unprecedented scale of social, cultural and economic change unleashed across Europe and America on the back of the Industrial Revolution caused governments to fear for their ability to maintain order. The study of urbanisation and its attendant effects was therefore a global endeavour. Even though Russian industrialisation did not begin in earnest until the 1880s, "Russian practitioners of these sciences were engaged in a sustained dialogue with their counterparts in other Western European countries."[56] Rapid, state-driven industrialisation fostered equally rapid urbanisation, which created a steeply growing demand for a host of basic amenities - sanitation, housing, roads, water, electricity, transport, communications, policing, medicine, and so on that were beyond the needs, and sometimes the aspirations, of municipal and national governments to supply. In Russia, as in western Europe, a mixture of "public, government-run institutions and private charities" tried to fill the breach, but succeeded only intermittently.[57] Municipal guardianships for the poor were established in every major Russian city.[58]

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the nineteenth century saw a tremendous increase in the number of societies aimed at the edification of the

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[55] Ibid., p.34.
[56] Daniel Beer, *Renovating Russia: The Human Sciences and the Fate of Liberal Modernity, 1880-1930* (Ithaca, 2008), p.24.
[57] Louise McReynolds, Cathy Popkin, and Steve Smith, "The Objective Eye and the Common Good", in Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (eds), *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1881-1940* (Oxford, 1998), p.57.
[58] Ibid., p.64.

masses and native peoples. Christian moralism and scientific rationalism were shaped by a growing bourgeois interventionism into a potent civilising mission. One of the most commonly cited causes of the supposed moral enfeeblement of spiralling urban populations was the lack of priests to shepherd them away from a wealth of new temptations. In England, religious societies like the Lancashire Congregational Union held separate collections for missions to what they described as the "uncivilised heathen lands" of the industrial north, a proselytising effort they conceived of alongside overseas missions as "two fronts of the same war, separated by geographical happenstance and little more."[59] Although they played out in differing colonial and domestic contexts, "the historical developments that gave rise to home missionary conceptions of the poor invariably reverberated in the foreign mission field and were refracted in foreign missionary discourse, and vice versa."[60] This was as much the case for Russian missionaries as British ones, even though they differed considerably, not least in the branch of Christianity they were preaching.[61]

Moral and physical degeneration

Unlike most of the empire's burgeoning cities, the late imperial period saw a significant increase in the number of Orthodox clergy in Irkutsk. In 1861, there were 316 clergy for its 24 779 inhabitants, or one clergyman per seventy-eight residents. By 1897, this ratio had almost halved, with one priest for every

[59] B. Nightingale, *The Story of the Lancashire Congregational Union, 1806-1906: Centenary Volume* (London, 1900), p.37, quoted in Susan Thorne, "'The Conversion of Englishmen and the Conversion of the World Inseparable': Missionary Imperialism and the Language of Class in Early Industrial Britain", in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, 1997), p.238.
[60] Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford University Press, 1999), p.24.
[61] The Protestant Church of England and the Russian Orthodox Church were at several removes from each other in the Christian family tree, having branched off from Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy respectively. Victor Roudometof has argued that the Great Schism of 1054 between what would become the 'Latin' (Roman Catholic) and 'Greek' (Orthodox) rites was merely a formality as "[b]y the ninth century, two distinct self-aware religious traditions already existed." Victor Roudometof, *Globalisation and Orthodox Christianity: The Transformations of a Religious Tradition* (New York, 2014), p.38.

thirty-three residents.[62] This can likely be attributed to the presence in Irkutsk of the headquarters of the Transbaikal mission under the leadership of the formidable Archbishop Veniamin.[63] There was great anxiety in regard to the morality of the city's largely Orthodox Russian urban inhabitants. Moral panic surrounding urban criminality was a key trope in local characterisations of lower-class peoples. Replicating the fashion for novels and travelogues highlighting the plight of the urban poor in St Petersburg, Moscow, London, Paris and many other cities, the British Anglican missionary Reverend Henry Lansdell's account of his time in Irkutsk is dotted with tales of the drunkenness and immorality. He described how even during the devastating fire of July 1879 there were those who rather than help save their homes, seized the chance to steal "huge family bottles of rye-brandy, some of which people hugged in their arms, as if for their life, whilst other bottles were standing about, or being drunk by those who carried them."[64] Causal links were regularly made between poverty, crime and working class alcohol sales. For instance, an 1880 New Year editorial in *Sibir'* stated that

> On the back of the [1879] crop failure, high prices endure for most of the population… [They are] using their savings to pay rent, and now a poor man consumes nearly his entire annual income to meet his costs. Always and everywhere, crime and death follow high prices. Needless to say, the latter half of last year did not provide an exception to these rules which have been laid out by science. Many crimes were committed in that time and there were many deaths. Diphtheria came to visit us.[65]

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[62] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, p.9. However, it should be remembered these figures only show how many people belonged to the clerical estate, which also included deacons and other junior figures.

[63] Sergei Kan, "Russian Orthodox Missionaries at Home and Abroad: The Case of Siberian and Alaskan Indigenous Peoples", in Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (eds), *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, 2001), p.213.

[64] Henry Lansdell, *Through Siberia*, Russia Observed (New York, 1882), pp.257-8.

[65] "Bolee Na Ispol'zovany 'Irkutyan' Kak Naimenovaniya," *Sibir'*, January 6, 1880, №2, p.1.

The local press was outspokenly anxious that this trend was being exacerbated by continued criminal exile to the province. *Sibir'* published angry editorials complaining that "the influx of that element which is considered to be most harmful in European Russia" was still being deposited in a city that was meant to be a bastion of Russian civilisation in Asia.[66] This was supposedly made even worse by the fact that a new breed of Russian urban criminal was undermining the morality of naive *Irkutyani*:

> Following the [Great] Reforms, other segments of society began to arrive in Siberia *en masse*; embezzlers, officials, Golden Jacks, and so on. Formerly, exiles showed their detrimental influence in their new homeland through simple evils, with 'peasant' crimes, that is to say, crudely. The latest have contributed to Siberia new, sophisticated techniques, and often declare themselves to be resourceful pioneers in undeveloped ground. Sadly, society cannot always combat them, and certain individuals have even expressed sympathy towards them. More than anything else in our society, it is difficult to watch how these people infest our public interests and achieve their goals.[67]

Although Irkutsk was comparatively small and there was little production located within the city itself, observers sought the remedy to the city's reputed lawlessness in the industrial cities of European Russia and western Europe. Fear of the infective power of a criminal element in urban society resonated with several branches of biological and nascent social sciences. One theory to emerge from this was the social underclass known as the 'residuum', first articulated in an 1867 parliamentary speech by the Radical Liberal MP John Bright. He described it as the "excessively poor…[the term] did not apply to working men paying 10*l* and 7*l* rental, but to the small class who are at the

[66] "Novie Lyudi," *Sibir'*, October 2, 1877, №40, p.3.
[67] Ibid. The Golden Jacks was a feared criminal gang in 1870s European Russia.

bottom of the scale."[68] In his analysis of the marginalised populations of "Outcast London", Gareth Stedman Jones labelled the residuum as "casual labour in its most acute form"; unskilled workers eking out a meagre, unstable existence on the fringes of the economy.[69] Their presence was seen to be a serious, universal social problem for all major cities in Europe and the New World from the 1880s. The Victorian commentator Hugh P. Tregarthen articulated the widely held view that "there is in the metropolis, as in every large town, a residuum" and that London seemed especially blighted only because it was the world's largest city.[70]

Michelle Elizabeth Allen has noted how these ideas conflated an initially economic categorisation with a Social Darwinist "pathology or urban life".[71] This bred fears of "the paradoxical existence of an unfit population…a diseased and dangerous new 'race'" in harsh, unnatural urban environments which both sustained them in defiance of natural laws and ultimately caused their racial degeneration.[72] The theory of 'degeneracy' played an important role in these discourses. Daniel Beer has described the "pan-European influence of this theory", as bourgeois concerns first expressed by British, French and Dutch eugenicists about the possibility of "moral and mental contagion" spreading to the rest of society were adopted in Russia as early as 1866, with eminent Russian scientists like V.M. Florinskii and Ivan Sikorskii as key exponents.[73] This was "established doctrine" by the 1880s; pathological language passed into journalistic vernacular as observers sought to connect science, criminology, anthropology and race.[74] These Russian specialists differed in their generally

[68] John Bright, *The Times*, 27 Mar. 1867, quoted in James Thompson, British Political Culture and the Idea of 'Public Opinion', 1867-1914 (Cambridge, 2013), p.74
[69] Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1971), pp.1, 283.
[70] Hugh. P. Tregarthen, 'Pauperism, distress, and the coming winter', *National Review*, 10 (Nov. 1887), pp.388-9, quoted in James Thompson, *British Political Culture and the Idea of "Public Opinion", 1867-1914* (Cambridge, 2013), p.76.
[71] Michelle Elizabeth Allen, *Cleansing the City: Sanitary Geographies in Victorian London* (Athens, Ohio, 2008), p.126.
[72] Ibid. pp.125-6.
[73] Beer, *Renovating Russia*, p.35.
[74] Robert C. Binkley, *Realism and Nationalism, 1852-1871*, Rise of Modern Europe 11 (New York, 1963), pp.1-2.

more sceptical approach to Social Darwinism, and the greater influence they placed on Neo-Lamarckian ideas of the inheritance and class-specifity of socially acquired characteristics like poverty and sexual licentiousness.[75] Internationally renowned Russian specialists also began to incorporate Cesare Lombroso's ideas of criminal atavism into an increasingly complex synthesis of pan-European science and anthropology. However, the majority remained sceptical; in Russia, urban disorders were usually diagnosed as socially constructed problems rather than inherent weaknesses.[76]

These ideas profoundly influenced another pan-European phenomenon of the late nineteenth century; the spectre of 'hooliganism'. Joan Neuberger has described the "moral panic" that gripped Russia's urban elites and peaked around the turn of the century, fuelled by a growing number of public disturbances.[77] Initially fears were stoked by a bourgeoning popular press, but such discussions had made their way into in more conservative, established newspapers like *Novoe Vremya* and the thick journals by 1907.[78] The hooligan became a "full-fledged symbol of the degenerative effect of the city" and a prominent feature of Russian social debate.[79] Using imagery reminiscent of travellers' horror stories about the "squalid, mean, and unkempt" streets of Siberian cities described in Chapter 1, in 1913 one observer in St Petersburg described how

> A terrible situation has seized our city, and under the name of hooliganism, takes forms that threaten the security of our society. Malicious assaults, fistfights, knifings, disgusting forms of depravity, and inexcusable drunkenness occur on our street - and are committed not only by grown men but by women and children as well. The situation has become so grave that it is necessary to

[75] Beer, *Renovating Russia*, pp.10-11.
[76] Ibid., pp.24, 32.
[77] Joan Neuberger, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture, and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914* (Berkeley, 1993), p.22.
[78] Ibid., p.22.
[79] Ibid., p.275.

> take serious measures to eradicate evil that no civilised country would tolerate.[80]

Just as domestic ideologies informed colonial policy and existing imperial ideas were recycled and adapted to the context of new colonies, so imperial language and ideas were turned inwards onto the metropolitan setting. Race, class and culture were wilfully spliced together to facilitate ruminations on social problems and often to justify the astonishing gulf between the lives of the rich and poor.[81] The rise of such emotive characters as the 'urban savage' and the 'hooligan' served to initiate what Steve Attridge has termed a "process of displacement", a rhetorical separation of the poor and their environment from their social superiors on the grounds of complete sociocultural alienation, incompatibility and even apparent racial disparity.[82]

For example, the "submerged tenth" inhabiting the slums of "darkest England" became a new frontier of exploration for an emerging breed of metropolitan adventurer such as the French artist Gustav Doré and the British philanthropist Charles Booth.[83] The domestic travelogue became a common genre, wherein the urban poor and their locales were at times explicitly aligned with colonies and the colonised and subjected to the same dehumanising narratives.[84] Daniel Beer has noted that these same themes emerged contemporaneously in Russian literature with Gogol's *Nevsky Prospekt* (1835), and ran through many great works of the Silver Age such as Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1873-7), as well as lesser-known works like V.V. Krestovskii's *Slums of Petersburg* (1867) and Vladimir Mikhnevich's *Plagues of Petersburg* (1882).[85] Krestovskii's description of a “pack” of

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[80] "Urban Affairs" (St Petersburg, 1913), quoted in Ibid., p.1.
[81] Grace Moore, *Dickens and Empire: Discourses of Class, Race and Colonialism in the Works of Charles Dickens* (Farnham, 2004), p.x.
[82] Steve Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity in Late Victorian Culture: Civil and Military Worlds* (Basingstoke, 2003), p.92.
[83] John Stokes, *Fin de Siècle/Fin Du Globe: Fears and Fantasies of the Late Nineteenth Century*, Warwick Studies in the European Humanities (Basingstoke, 1992), p.14.
[84] See Saree Makdisi, *Making England Western: Occidentalism, Race, and Imperial Culture* (Chicago, 2014).
[85] Beer, *Renovating Russia*, p.70.

seemingly feral "portico cadgers" begging outside the Church of Our Savour in the Haymarket district of St Petersburg is done in grotesque, dehumanising fashion; "the way these people stood on the cold stone porch was inhuman... This was the most pitiful of all the species of the beggar fraternity."[86] Among the adults there were "two hideous, noseless hags, unspared by vile disease but spared by death", "a deformed old idiot dwarf woman", and to top it all "by the inner doors of the church stood not a man, but the likeness of a man, or else the hint of a human organism ... a deformed, hunchbacked, legless being... His figure bore an extraordinary resemblance to a hedgehog or porcupine."[87]

Elsewhere, world-renowned authors such as Kipling and Dickens played up this same notion, but perhaps the most vivid depiction was in the explorative non-fiction of the likes of Charles F.G. Masterman, Karl Pearson and Walter Besant.[88] Even though Masterman criticised those who "gaze at Hoxton or the Boroughs as on some Western Indian mountain", he nevertheless characterised the workers of London's East End as wild beasts hunting in ever-growing packs, the amorphous "dense back masses" that "reeled and drank and swore, walking and leaping and blaspheming God." [89] The explicit alignment of urban poverty with blasphemy and heresy was a particularly damning indictment in a time when Christianity and civility were so closely linked. Moreover, Masterman characterised working class social disorder as direct action against the forces of the Crown, akin to native resistance in the colonies. He also believed that just as "those who have fought together, like the component parts of the Empire, become bound together with a new sense of comradeship", these bands of urban savages who had stood against the

[86] V.V. Krestovskii, Peterburgskie Trushchoby (kniga O Sytykh I Golodnykh) (St Petersburg: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1993), 1:235-244, quoted in Louise McReynolds and James Von Geldern, *Entertaining Tsarist Russia: Tales, Songs, Plays, Movies, Jokes, Ads, And Images From Russian Urban Life, 1779-1917*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p.123.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity in Late Victorian Culture*, pp.96-7.
[89] Charles F. G Masterman, *From the Abyss: Of Its Inhabitants, by One of Them*, English Working Class (London, 1980), pp.96-7, 2-3.

forces of law and order would have to be conquered and civilised in the same way, through military conscription.[90] The tsarist autocracy also attempted to use its imperial army as a nation-building tool, but commitment was variable and results were mixed.[91]

Doré's sensational depiction of an exoticised, hellish, “savage London” attracted widespread attention. He described an "extraordinary tangle of dark alleys" with "black pools of water under our feet - only a riband of violet grey sky overhead" where "the oaths are loud, and the crime is continuous."[92] He stressed exoticism and alienation, explicitly describing the slums of London as a foreign land, "the natives of which will look upon us as the Japanese looked upon the first European travellers in the streets of Jeddo.[93] Continuing the quasi-colonial, military theme of Masterman, Doré described its inhabitants as "the ne'er do wells of the great army," and of having to make his way through the slums as though on military manoeuvres; he was told to stick close to his police superintendent guide, who was "accosting each policeman on his beat, and now and then collecting two or three, and planting them at strategical points or openings, that cover our advance, and keep the open country behind us."[94]

This ambiguity between urban and colonial savages was increased by the ethnic diversity of nineteenth century Russian cities.[95] St Petersburg was conceived as Peter the Great’s 'window on Europe', while Moscow, the bastion

[90] Ibid., p.98.
[91] See Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905-1925* (DeKalb, 2003).
[92] William Blanchard Jerrold and Gustav Doré, *London: A Pilgrimage* (New York, 2005), p.171.
[93] More commonly known as Edo or Yedo, the port city renamed Tokyo following the Meiji Restoration in 1868.
[94] Blanchard Jerrold and Doré, p.170.
[95] Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I*, Russian Research Center Studies 94 (London, 2003), p.4.

of old Russia, also had long-established minority communities.[96] The cities of the western borderlands, notably Kiev and Odessa, had diverse populations. Even with the mass migration of Russian peasants, the proportion of non-Russians in the imperial capital increased slightly from 16.8% in 1869 to 17.7% in 1910.[97] Urban populations were highly transient, especially before the 1890s, and growth "resulted as much or more from rapid turnover of migrants as from permanent settlement".[98] However, ethnic diversity was often neglected in discussions of Russian urban space.[99] Its location on the southern edge of Russia's Asian empire meant that Irkutsk initially had a relatively large proportion of non-Russian inhabitants, with 31.03% coming from the *inorodtsy* estate in 1875.[100] However, population increase brought about by the development of gold mining and resettlement led to Irkutsk becoming much more homogenous and ethnically Russian. Although its numbers are often questionable, the 1897 census recorded just 2 500 non-Russians in a population of 51 500.[101] In Siberia there was a tendency to downplay or even ignore non-Russians registered in urban estates, especially Muslim Tatars and Buriats whose socio-economic status was often at odds with pre-existing ideas of Christianity and civilisation. This was most frequently the case when the 'specialists' studying these people were also missionaries or imperial officials whose social-political agendas informed their ethnographic study far more than the other way round.[102] As mentioned at the start of this chapter, by

[96] Steven Duke, "Multiethnic St Petersburg; The Late imperial Period", in Helena Goscilo and Stephen M. Norris (eds), *Preserving Petersburg: History, Memory, Nostalgia* (Bloomington, 2008), p.142. One account that focuses largely on the Soviet and post-Soviet era is Cordula Gdaniec, *Cultural Diversity in Russian Cities: The Urban Landscape in the Post-Soviet Era* (New York, 2010). See also Sascha Auerbach, *Race, Law, and "The Chinese Puzzle" in Imperial Britain* (Basingstoke, 2009); James R. Barrett, *The Irish Way: Becoming American in the Multiethnic City* (New York, 2012); Mark Wild, *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkeley, 2005).
[97] Duke, "Multiethnic St Petersburg', p.146.
[98] Daniel R. Brower, *The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity, 1850-1900* (Berkeley, 1990), p.79.
[99] One notable exception was the empire's Jewish population. The relaxation of settlement restrictions on Jews in the late imperial period generated an inordinate amount column inches. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.
[100] "Naselenie Irkutskoi Guberny Za 1875 God (Velkuposh)," p.6.
[101] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, p.9.
[102] Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, 2001), pp.40, 159.

contrast it was the lower class Russian inhabitants, usually registered as peasants, who tended to be almost entirely absent from the accounts of 'outsiders' passing through Irkutsk.

The debate surrounding the degree to which cities were 'peasantised' or peasants were 'proletarianised' is extensive.[103] European Russian peasant migrants often maintained strong social, cultural and economic links to their home villages, and it was only in the latter years of tsardom that they began to gradually display consciously urban identities.[104] Before the Stolypin reforms, many seasonal workers (*otkhodniki*) dutifully returned to their village when required to work in the fields and received family visits whilst away from home.[105] It was also a pan-European phenomenon; David Moon has suggested that "the debates concerning the French peasantry provide a useful lens through which to consider developments at the opposite end of Europe."[106] The transformative effect of urban life on peasant migrants can be seen in the work of the artist and ethnographer Olga Tian-Shanskaia, who spent four years among the peasants of Ryazan' province at the turn of the twentieth century. Setting out to debunk the enduring image of the passive *narod*, she said those who returned from seasonal work in Moscow displayed "urban manners" and wore "'city clothes' including peaked caps, and wore boots instead of bast

[103] See, for example Evel Economakis, *From Peasant To Petersburger* (Basingstoke, 1998); Barbara Alpern Engel, *Between the Fields and the City: Women, Work, and Family in Russia, 1861-1914* (Cambridge, 1996); Robert Eugene Johnson, "Peasant Migration and the Russian Working Class: Moscow at the End of the Nineteenth Century," *Slavic Review* 35, no. 4 (December 1, 1976), pp.652-64, [viewed 31/10/2013] doi:10.2307/2495656.
[104] David Moon, 'Late imperial peasants', in Ian D. Thatcher, *Late Imperial Russia: Problems and Prospects ; Essays in Honour of R.B. McKean* (Manchester, 2005), p.121.
[105] Johnson, "Peasant Migration and the Russian Working Class," p.655.
[106] Moon, 'Late imperial peasants' p.121. By way of comparison, Eugen Weber has stated that increased exposure to salaried work in the factories led to a fundamental alteration of the mindset of the French peasantry, as they came to see subsistence farming as "far from a glorious road to autonomy" but instead as "the essence of futility and humiliation." Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, 1976), p.484.

footwear... [They] started to smoke cigarettes rather than pipes, and many peasants began to carry wallets."[107]

Such issues caused problems for the Irkutsk regionalists who promoted the existence of a unique Siberian (*Sibiriak*) ethnic type that was closely tied to historical and contemporary practices of frontier colonisation and arable farming. From the mid-1870s, *Sibir'* began reporting on the negative effects of the transformation of the provincial capital. This manifested in descriptions similar to those discussed above in relation to St Petersburg and other large cities. An article entitled 'The Proletariat of the City of Irkutsk' described how the city had to bear an ever-growing population of amoral, unemployed and seasonal workers, who "have neither roof nor shelter…these people live outside the city, in tents and burrows dug in brick barns and in copses", meaning that "the rest of society had to pay taxes and duties for them, and even 'care' for them, support their hospitals and almshouses, etc., as most of them have neither house nor home."[108] It went on to describe an "even worse section of the proletariat", a collection of "betters and hereditary nobles thrown out of school, rootless, homeless '*Amurtsi*' [failed Amur settlers] of blessed memory, 'gentlemen' who drink too much for their social circle, and finally the children of the indigenous townspeople, abandoned by their parents or orphaned."[109] These outcasts were perceived as such a menace that local authorities dealt with them by internment; "on the nights of Christmas and Easter, police rounded up two hundred of these young men and locked them in jail on the pretext that they would have perpetrated mischief when most householders go out to church."[110] However, the author of the article dismissed any notion of atavism. Whilst conceding that "most of them have reached this point by their own actions: laziness, drunkenness, and petty

[107] Olga Semyonova Tian-Shanskaia, *Village Life in Late Tsarist Russia*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington, 1993) quoted in Moon, 'Late imperial peasants', p.121. See also Brower, *The Russian City between Tradition and Modernity, 1850-1900*.
[108] "Proletarii G. Irkutska," p.1.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.

fraud" they reminded the reader that they were "all sons of Irkutsk" and challenged would-be moralists: "Do you know enough about their fortunes to honestly say that the wretched state of these proletarians is solely their own fault?... I defy you to say that you and your children, in their position, would not have ended up in such a miserable state."[111]

A.P. Shchapov was a proud *Irkutyan*, but one increasingly embittered by life as an exile in the provincial capital. He expounded a similar defence of Siberian unity that eschewed socio-economic divisions. However, he also described social change as contributing to a feeling of estrangement that was a familiar complaint of the empire's metropolitan elites. Whilst he cited the growth of capitalism and the diversification of populations as the cause of social discord, Shchapov said the rupture was within individual communities rather than between classes. He excoriated the province's increasingly wealthy merchants, whom he labelled "urban bourgeois hoarders" (*gorodskikh burzhuaznikh skonidomov*), for their "feverish greed" which he said "drowns out the voice of social and moral instincts, and consciousness of public duty." [112] Shchapov compared them unfavourably to the city's "working poor" whom he characterised as having

> acquired the reputation of hard-working, assiduous people (*chesto-trudyashchikhsya, userdno-rabotaiushchikh lyudei*)... Only among these people do you often hear the most endearing speech about work as a natural function of human nature, which alone gives the natural right to... subsistence. 'Glory to God' these people say from the heart... God gave work, and if work is there, everything is there; so we live![113]

[111] Ibid.
[112] A.P. Shchapov, "Selskaiia Osedlo-Inorodcheskaia i Russko-Krestyanskaia Obschina v Kudinsko-Lenskom Krae," *Izvestia Sibirskogo Otdel Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obschestvo* VI, №.3 (July 1875), pp.108-9.
[113] Ibid., pp.107-8.

Moreover, as with the Upper Lena peasants, Shchapov cited the growing ethnic diversification of the Irkutsk population as a major factor in the loss of fellow feeling:

> The heterogeneity of the constantly unknown population coming from Russia and elsewhere has created a composite society of variegated tribes, ethnicities and classes... [T]here are many Buriats and tribute payers, Jews, Tatars, Germans, Poles and other foreigners and non-residents, as well as alien inhabitants ... [forming] uniquely closed, isolated social estates of Cossacks, traders, merchants, settlers and tribute payers. With such a heterodox and variegated society in Irkutsk there is not, nor can there be, communal public interests and aspirations, social consensus, social cooperation, social reciprocity or solidarity.[114]

As noted in Chapter 1, the desire to foster a municipal spirit was a recurring theme among the Irkutsk cultural class. Writing thirty years later, the Siberian regionalist academic, explorer and native of Tomsk province Pyotr M. Golovachev (1861-1913) wrote a series of articles for *Sibirskie Voprosui* which show the enduring pull of the regionalist doctrine of Siberian uniqueness put forward by Shchapov and Yadrintsev. Golovachev wrote in response to rising labour unrest and socialist agitation in Siberia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which culminated in the events of the 1905 Revolution. A specialist in economic geography, Golovachev wrote that as "Siberia is not a manufacturing country" on the scale of European Russia, "these [Socialist] principles are groundless, having basis neither in the state and development of local industry, nor in the number of people in the stages of the relationship between labour and capital as stated in the programme... As a result, the very path of social revolution is factually impossible".[115] Golovachev also argued that socialist manifesto promises addressing the legacy of emancipation,

[114] Ibid., p.106.
[115] Golovachev, “Realnie Interesi Sibiri i Krayniya Leviya Partii,” p.3.

reducing landlordism and other peasant grievances were "quite useless" to the *Sibiriak*, and those that were useful - such as reform of local government and freedom of speech - were covered by other parties.[116] He concluded that not only did Siberia lack the essential socio-economic preconditions for socialism, there was an insurmountable, innate reason that it would fail: "the implementation of the Social Democratic programme in the field of production is not suitable to the psychological properties of the native Siberian peasant, a born individualist (*prirozhdennogo individualista*)." [117] This *ex post facto* challenge to the appeal of Socialism seems difficult to maintain. As noted earlier, the majority of workers on the Trans-Siberian Railway were not actually native Russian-Siberians. Moreover, whilst serfdom had not existed in Siberia, peasants there did grapple with economic stratification and exploitation. Not only would many of the growing *novosely* population have had such experiences, but their presence in Irkutsk province would have exacerbated pre-existing problems of inequality. However, it is interesting for the purposes of this study to note that Golovachev fell back on traditional images of the *Sibiriak* as an independent actor and pioneer, operating outside the parameters of Russian history, in his attempt to refute the contemporary appeal of socialism.

Red Days in Irkutsk[118]

One political ideology in which issues of class would (or should) have been more important than ethnicity was Marxism. Growing support for Socialist movements was one of the most significant by-products of industrialisation and urbanisation in the Russian Empire. It is beyond the bounds of this study

[116] Ibid., p.7.
[117] Ibid.
[118] I. Serebrennikov, "'Krasnie' Dni v Irkutske (Posvyaschaetsya M.E. Amosovoi) [pt 1]," *Sibirskie Voprosui* 3,. №20 (1907), p.13-23.

to attempt to add to the voluminous historiography of Russia's revolutions.[119] However, within the anthropocentric, culturally-focused limits of this project, publications by Irkutsk's Social Democrats during the 1905 Revolution are an interesting case study in portable frames of reference for the lower classes. Although they interpreted their homeland primarily through a Marxist lens of internationalist class conflict, the Irkutsk Social Democrats attempted to accommodate Siberian regionalism as well. The temporary recession of state power in 1905 allowed them to openly produce and circulate revolutionary material more widely than ever before. Although the Social Revolutionaries also enjoyed support, the Social Democratic parties were well represented among the province's industrial workers. These gains were partly due to the policy of co-operation practiced by left-wing groups in the empire's outlying regions.[120] This trend was especially pronounced during the events of the 1905 Revolution and the aftermath of the Lena gold-fields massacre. This was a common feature of early twentieth Russian activism. There were joint Social Democrat and Socialist Revolutionary committees in Saratov, Kharkov and Kiev, as well as less formal alliances in important cities like St Petersburg.[121] As such, in combination with materials from other local, non-Communist sources, this narrower range of resources is more representative than it would be in the larger, more ideologically fraught areas of European Russia.

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[119] As a representative sample of the key arguments surrounding the revolutionary period, see Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: A Short History* (Stanford, 2004); Sarah Badcock, *Politics and the People in Revolutionary Russia: A Provincial History*, New Studies in European History (Cambridge, 2007); Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924* (London, 1997); Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917* (Boston, 1997) Part 4: Imperial Russia under pressure, pp.315-477; Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York, 2011); H. Rogger, *Russia in the Age of Modernisation and Revolution 1881 - 1917* (Abingdon, 2014); Anthony J. Heywood and Jonathan D. Smele, *The Russian Revolution of 1905: Centenary Perspectives* (Abingdon, 2013); Ian D. Thatcher (ed.), *Reinterpreting Revolutionary Russia: Essays in Honour of James D. White* (London, 2006); Rex A. Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917* (Cambridge, 2005); Peter Waldron, *The End of Imperial Russia, 1855-1917* (London, 1997).

[120] See Michael Melancon, "'Marching Together!': Left Bloc Activities in the Russian Revolutionary Movement, 1900 to February 1917," *Slavic Review* 49, №2 (July 1, 1990): pp.239-52, doi:10.2307/2499483.

[121] Ibid., pp.239-40.

Compared to European Russia, the overall number of socialist activists in Siberia was small. However, Irkutsk province had a long history of socialist activism due to its role as a place of exile for political undesirables, beginning with the Decembrists of 1826. Many of these men, and their families, were venerated for their fundamental importance in establishing cultural life not just in Irkutsk city, but also smaller towns like Selenginsk.[122] The Decembrists were followed in the late imperial period first by the Populists (*Narodniki*) in the 1870s and then the Socialist Revolutionaries and Social Democrats in the 1880s and 1890s. The city's first Marxist circle was formed in 1899; a "whole network of circles" would follow across the region's railway stores.[123] Those deemed by the state to be less dangerous were often placed in and around Irkutsk, enabling them to observe the city's working population at close quarters and take part in some of the municipal cultural institutions. Due to an acute shortage of educated officials and police checks, some were also able to obtain jobs in the railroad administration. These factors fostered a strong element of Socialism in the Irkutsk cultural class.

In spite of the strikes and industrial disputes mentioned above, the fitness or otherwise of Irkutsk province for socialist revolution remained a largely theoretical, localised issue until 1905. First, a summary of events. Improved communicative networks meant that definitive news of Bloody Sunday arrived in Irkutsk on 12th January 1905, just three days after it happened. Given their links to workers and effective local organisation, the Irkutsk Social Democrats were able to act "more actively and decisively" than their political rivals when the news of rebellion broke.[124] However, there was an increase in popular support for both the Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries. By July 1905, their reach seemed significant enough to hold an "all-Siberian conference, attended by representatives of all the committees of Social Democratic groups of railway workers, and some non-affiliated workers and

[122] I., "Kulturnaya Rol Zhenschini v Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №.49-52 (1908): p.3.
[123] Reichman, "The 1905 Revolution on the Siberian Railroad," p.31.
[124] P. V-bskii, 'Iz khroniki osvoboditel'nogo dvizheniia v Sibiri,' *Sibirski Voprosi*, №2 (1906), p.246.

some intelligentsia".[125] The Social Democrats claimed to have 430 members in Irkutsk by 1906.[126] Irkutsk workers struck on 9th August in support of their comrades in Chita, and issued a statement imploring other cities to join.[127] The Irkutsk railwaymen joined the all-Russian general strike on 11th October, three days after it was proclaimed in St Petersburg. Writing in *Sibirskie Voprosui*, Ivan Innokentevich Serebrennikov (1882-1940), a native of Znamensk in Verkholensk County, claimed that the Irkutsk workers were "fully aware of the political nature of the strike."[128] Serebrennikov was a regionalist ethnographer, journalist and later a Minister in the anti-Bolshevik All-Russian Provisional Government formed by Admiral A.V. Kolchak, so he could not be described as a Marxist sympathiser. The telecommunications workers also joined the movement that same day, cutting telegraph cables across the Urals.[129] The strike spread across Irkutsk city to non-industrial workers, and enjoyed such support that "On 15th October, at 2 o'clock, all shops and stores were closed, and employees and workers in the printing houses and warehouses, employees in many public and private institutions - banks, counting houses, the city council, and others - and all officials and employees at Irkutsk station were withdrawn."[130] They were joined by teachers, taxi drivers, merchants and even some government functionaries.

Shortly thereafter, "self-defence squads" were formed to protect the strikers from assaults by both troops and Black Hundred mobs, and the hastily convened "joint strike committee... little by little into came into the role of a kind of 'interim government' of the city."[131] The committee was composed of a "bourgeois" section which included merchants, professional and skilled workers, the Union of Women's Equality, and various other non-Communist political and professional organisations workers, and a "workers" section

[125] "Ot Redaktsy," *Sotsial'-Demokraticheskii Listok*, July 1905, №1, p.1.
[126] "Korrespondentsi," *Sotsial'-Demokraticheskiy Listok*, №3 (September 1905) , p.3.
[127] Reichman, "The 1905 Revolution on the Siberian Railroad," p.35.
[128] Serebrennikov, "'Krasnie' Dni - 1", p.14.
[129] Ibid., p13.
[130] Ibid., p.15.
[131] Ibid.

which also included representatives of the Social Democrats."[132] Although the city-wide Irkutsk strike petered out in a few days, the postal and telegraph strike lasted longer in Irkutsk than in any other Russian city.[133]

Irkutsk's Social Democrats were keen place these events within the framework of an all-empire movement and downplayed notions of Siberian uniqueness accordingly. The locally-produced *Sotsial'-Demokraticheskii Listok* insistently advocated "the unity of all Russian workers (*vse obshcherusskoi raboti*).[134] In the same way that the regionalist press sought to reinforce their vision of Irkutsk province's place within the state, the editors of the *Sotsial'-Demokraticheskii Listok* reported on unrest across the empire as a means of "finding and strengthening ties with the mass of the proletariat" (*na otiskanie i ukreplenniie svyazei v massakh proletariya*).[135] This was mainly focused on the capitals, but also covered cities as far west as Gomel in modern-day Belarus. It also printed correspondence and reports from regional cities like Chita and Krasnoyarsk:[136]

> Everywhere in Russia, the popular war against the tsarist autocracy has begun, for the government of the people. Thousands of working people already have already spilt their blood for the freedom of their native country. The newspapers are already filled with reports of street battles between the people and the tsarist government in Warsaw, Lodz, Odessa and in other places…
>
> So how can it be that the Siberian workers (*sibirskii rabochii*) remain calm at the time when in front of their eyes all workers, all honest Russia has already entered into a relentless war against the killer tsar and his forces? Before that, of course, the workers of

[132] Ibid., pp.13, 18.
[133] I. Serebrennikov, "'Krasnie' Dni v Irkutske [pt2]," *Sibirskie Voprosui* 3, №. 21 (1907): p.14.
[134] "Iz Partii," *Sotsial'-Demokraticheskii Listok*, №3(September 1905), p.5.
[135] "Ot Redaktsii," p.1.
[136] *Sotsial'-Demokraticheskiy Listok*, №.3 (September 1905), p.6.

> Siberia should answer one question: how can they support their fellow workers in Russia?[137]

Although this editorial identified a specifically 'Siberian' worker, it appears that unlike the conception of the *Sibiriak* put forward by Yadrintsev and Shchapov, ethnicity was not a decisive factor. The Irkutsk Marxists consistently used the civic, non-racial identifier - *rossiiskii narod* - to denote 'the Russian people' rather than the exclusively ethnic-Russian appellation *russkii narod*: "The Russian working class (*Rossiiskii rabochii klass*) is waving the red flag and waging war on the tsarist autocracy."[138] This distinction was reflective of the linguistic style of the metropolitan Bolsheviks. Leon Trotsky, whose Jewishness would have been a barrier in any racially-defined Russian community, wrote that

> The workers of St. Petersburg, from all the factories and workshops openly expressed every need and requirement of the Russian people (*rossiiskii narod*): There should be neither peasant nor nobility, everyone should be equal in their rights. The Great and Little Russians, Poles and Jews - all should be equal in their rights... Orthodox and dissenters, Catholics and Stundists - all have the right to practice their faith, and all should be equal in their rights.[139]

However, the justification given for the founding of the *Sotsial'-Demokraticheskii Listok* in July 1905 is telling of an inability to break away entirely from the idea of Siberian separateness. Similar to regionalist condemnation of the metropolitan press as a "remote fireplace", its proprietors claimed that not only were the general, all-Russian party publications "too scarce and too delayed" for Siberia, but they also did not fulfil

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[137] "Tsarskaya Voyna i Vseobshchaya Sibirskaya Stachka," *Sotsial'-Demokraticheskiy Listok*, №1, (July 1905) , p.2.
[138] "Nado Toropitsya (Tsarskii Mir I Gosudarstvennaya Duma)," p.3.
[139] Lev. Trotsky, "Krest'yane, k vam nashe slovo!" in *Nasha pervaia revolyutsiia, Chast I* (Moscow, 2013), p.172.

the "need for all-Russian (or all-Siberian) articles".[140] Such arguments perhaps reflected either a shared belief in the popularity of regionalist concepts amongst the workers, or the common ancestry of Irkutsk regionalism and socialism.

The Irkutsk Social Democrats also had their own take on the debate surrounding the spread of 'civilisation' in the province. Unsurprisingly, in their conceptions, the division between civility and backwardness was based on economic function. The task of civilising was to lie with the workers, whilst the *starozhily*, *novosely* and *inorodtsy* shared the role of passive recipients of enlightenment: "The impetus coming from the working class has stirred the other layers of the population. The mass of 'small' people (*'melkogo' naroda*) - salesmen, telegraph operators, low officials, railwaymen, employees who were previously silent - now speak. The peasants have been illuminated by this movement."[141] The description of Bloody Sunday as having "opened the eyes of the widest mass of the still dark folk (*eshche rabochego naroda*) better than a thousand of our leaflets could", harnessed the familiar analogy of bringing the light of civilisation to the dark masses, regardless of ethnicity.[142]

Conclusion

Irkutsk styled itself as a bastion of European civilisation, the 'Paris of Siberia', but there were others who felt that it echoed the great cities of western Europe for less flattering reasons. Its population had only surpassed one hundred thousand in 1911, by which point St Petersburg was almost twenty times that -1.9 million -climbing to almost 2.45 million by February 1917.[143] In

[140] "Sibirskaya Zhizn Kak Pochva Dlya Iskusstva," *Sibir'*, February 10, 1880, №6, p.1; "Ot Redaktsii," p.1.
[141] "Za Polgoda: Kratkiy Obzor Sotsial-Demokraticheskoi Deyatelnosti v Sibiri: 1 Yanvarya - 1 Iulya 1905," *Sotsial'-Demokraticheskii Listok*, №1 (July 1905), p.2.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Gerald Dennis Surh, *1905 In St. Petersburg: Labor, Society, and Revolution* (Stanford, 1989), p.11.

comparison, by that point London and Paris were home to more than seven million and four and a half million people respectively. However, local and visiting observers drew on imperial and international cultural networks in their search for interpretative methodologies to characterise the city's growth under the auspices of the gold rush, continued criminal exile and increasing peasant migration. As such these depictions owed a great deal to the scientific, anthropological and political theories that had been developed in relation to the great metropolises of Europe.

Whilst there were rarely sustained arguments for the uniformity of native peoples, peasants and workers, there was a strong interchange in the ways they were represented and ideas of how to 'civilise' them.[144] Joan Neuberger has interpreted this characterisation of "savages" and "beasts" as an means for the middle classes to reconcile themselves to the failure of their domestic civilising mission; they blamed the lower classes for failing to become accultured, and attributed this to their semi- (or wholly-) barbarous state; "cultural pluralism did not sit well with the Russian intelligentsia, old or new, both of whom wanted their own standards accepted as the norm." [145] Unsurprisingly given the analytical tools used, the proposed solutions to these problems, such as hygiene guardianships, educational societies and public works, were modelled on the municipal policies of large European cities. Even answers to the city's suicide rate were sought in a supposedly analogous phenomenon in European Russia.[146] There was also a strong element in this dialogue that would have been familiar to observers of the Russian *narod* and *inorodtsy.* In their paternal approach, these scientific observers often portrayed an infantilised proletariat in need of moral guidance, harnessing the imagery of darkness and the light of civilisation so often used in both of these contexts.

[144] Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda", in Cooper and Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire*, pp.25-6.
[145] Neuberger, *Hooliganism*, pp.266-7.
[146] N.S., "Vnutrennie Fenomen," *Irkutskaya Gazeta*, №7 (December 2, 1913), p.2.

Alongside these views, the city's steadily growing Socialist movement burst forth in 1905-06. Social Democrat activists, through the prism of a Marxist ideology honed in relation to the industrialised cities of western Europe, conceptualised an East Siberian proletariat to help push for worldwide revolution alongside their comrades west of the Urals. Other, more conservative observers also saw a Siberian proletariat, but one characterised by degeneracy, a semi-wild imperial 'other' akin to the 'residuum' of darkest St Petersburg or London. This debate also highlighted the durability of regionalist conceptions of the Irkutsk population in the face of a growing challenge from Marxist social interpretations. In refuting the cachet of Socialism in East Siberia, Irkutsk regionalists such as A.P. Shchapov and P.M. Golovachev reverted to ideas of the uniqueness of the *starozhily* that were grounded in historic images of the Siberian peasant.

4

Inorodtsy: The Buriats of late imperial Irkutsk province

> Within the confines of the Russian Empire there are more than 17 million members of these uncivilised tribes, a very impressive figure that deserves serious attention. Here is where to focus effort and diligence, where you need to impose European civilisation! But to do this, it is vital that these peoples themselves naturally emerge from their sleep, that they themselves feel the need to be refreshed, updated, the need for European culture... These symptoms are, once again, small, but are most remarkable, and most are already seen among the Buriat people of Siberia. The awakening of uncivilised peoples; what a pleasing present, and what a joyful future![1]

Non-Russian ethnic and religious groups were a significant factor in the debate on the relative merits of the ethnic Russian-Siberian population and new settlers in Irkutsk province. Perceptions of native peoples, their abilities, faults or prospects necessarily came with either an overt or tacit comparison to their Russian neighbours and as such they "defined the boundaries of Russianness".[2] In the late imperial period, the non-Russian population of Siberia was a heterodox grouping, encompassing Siberian aborigines, Jews, non-Russian

[1] L., 'Ne Ugashaite Sveta!' *Sibirskie Voprosui*, 1908, p.2.
[2] Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2001), p.11.

Europeans and others. Although cast together in the minds of many Russian and *Sibiriak* writers, the only unifying thread was not being, or not being considered to be, 'Russian'.

This chapter will focus on the Buriats, a northern Mongolian sub-group living in Irkutsk province. As the province's largest and most prosperous native group, the Buriats strongly influenced how the Irkutsk cultural class perceived non-Russian Siberian peoples. They encompassed a wide range of socio-cultural states ranging from shamanic nomads to Buddhist farmers to Orthodox merchants.[3] These heterodox groupings were subjected to the "transformationist culture" and civilising projects of both the tsarist government and educated society which overlaid a more explicitly and ruthlessly imperial aspect to the "internal colonisation" of Irkutsk's Russian and non-native subjects alike.[4] In terms of categories of analysis and the images produced within them, there were strong similarities; perceived economic shortcomings, governmental demand for the 'rationalisation' of land use, and cultural issues surrounding morality, the treatment of women, religion and education. These categories of analysis recall Hayden White's conception of the tropes of 'otherness': "association with woods and beasts, irrationality, inability to speak or muteness, paganism invariably manifested not only by incorrect worship but also behaviourally - breaking dietary and sexual taboos of 'normal' human societies".[5] Whilst racialism was an identifiable element in some of these discussions, widespread recognition of historical and contemporary ethnic mixing between Russians and Buriats did much to limit its application. At the local level this created what could be deemed a

[3] The most common etymology for this word is that it comes from the Tungus (Evenki) people of Siberia, and was subsequently adopted by Russians to refer to a wide range of indigenous Siberian religions: Berthold Laufer, 'Origin of the Word Shaman', *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 19 (1917), p.361. However, recent scholarship has suggested the term is ultimately from the Sanskrit *śramanas* meaning 'monk': Benjamin W. Fortson IV, *Indo-European Language and Culture: An Introduction* (Chichester, 2011), p.401.

[4] Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge, 2011), p.3.

[5] Hayden White, "The Forms of Wilderness: Archaeology of an Idea" in Edward Dudley and Maximilian E. Novak (eds), *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Pittsburgh, 1972), pp.19-22.

splintered analysis of the Buriats. They were sub-categorised in accordance with attributes they were deemed to have acquired from, or had imparted to them by, the Russians via a characteristically late-nineteenth century admixture of innatism and environmental determinism. The effect created by this splintered Buriat population was reminiscent of the 'micro-variability' of the peasantry described by Corinne Gaudin.[6] As such, characterisations of the Buriats were, as with the *starozhily*, not merely idle abstractions but helped to inform a wide range of state policies ranging from property rights to schooling.

Who were the *inorodtsy*?[7]

As European explorers travelled to the furthest reaches of the globe and encountered hitherto unseen lands and peoples, "the period 1760-1860 was a critical one in the epistemological and economic creation of 'indigenous peoples' as a series of comparable categories."[8] Russian imperial expansion across the Eurasian landmass was no different to maritime exploration in that regard. As the empire advanced south and east it came to rule populations to which it had no historic or ethnic link. Somewhere in this process of conquest and annexation these Siberian peoples became no longer 'foreigners' (*inostrany*) but wandering, alien "subjects of the white Tsar".[9] By the late eighteenth century, the myriad "small peoples" of the empire had been placed roughly into the classifications that still exist today. Descriptions covered origins, territory, physical appearance, clothing, temperament, intellectual and economic life, dwellings, food, religion, writing systems, theories of time, marriage and burial practice, childrearing, health and festivals.[10] These groups

[6] Corinne Gaudin, *Ruling Peasants: Village and State in Late Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, 2007), p.13.
[7] John W. Slocum, 'Who, and When, Were the Inorodtsy? The Evolution of the Category of "Aliens" in Imperial Russia', *Russian Review*, 57 (1998), pp.173-90.
[8] Alan Lester, "Imperial Networks: Creative Identities in Nineteenth Century South Africa and Britain", in Stephen Howe (ed.), *The New Imperial Histories Reader*, Routledge Readers in History (Abingdon, 2010), p.139.
[9] Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca, 1994), p.ix.
[10] Ibid., p.x.

were each assigned to a Russian, or at least Russified, category. For example, the Arctic peoples now known as Nenets, Enets, Nganasans and Selkups were for centuries referred to as the Samoyed, which was popularly translated into Russian as the suitably exotic 'self-eater'.[11] Along with these individual epithets, Siberian natives were, as a whole, known by a plethora of names including "other Siberians" (*drugie Sibiriakii*), *inozemsty* (people of a different land), *inovertsy* (people of a different belief) and, most commonly, *inorodtsy* (people of a different stock or birth).[12] In Siberia, most of these tribes were also tribute-payers (*yasachnie*), a historic category of subject peoples. Most paid a fur tribute to the Russian Treasury in the same way they had to the Chinese in previous centuries. In an early example of the splintering of the categories of native and peasant, in 1724 Peter I ordered that the "Siberian tribute-paying people" (*Sibirskie yasachnie lyudi*) be incorporated into the Russian estates system, whereupon they "were formally subsumed in the larger category of state peasants" but retained the title of tribute-payers.[13] However, this administrative expedience would not last. In 1822, the Governor-General of Siberia Mikhail Speranskii introduced the Statute on Alien Administration. It pertained to all "alien tribes who had hitherto been known as *yasak* people", including those who had adopted settled Russian agriculture, the Orthodox faith and spoke the Russian language. Speranskii's legal code was "a peculiar combination of the 'modern' approach to natives and the 'archaic' one" in that they retained separate legal status, collective responsibility for tribute payments and internal self-government, whilst at the same time being placed into the imperial free market under the lens of Enlightenment-tinged ideas of a hierarchical 'ladder' of civilisation.[14] Speranskii's statute made clear

[11] However, the most likely etymology is the Saami phrase *saam-edne*, meaning 'land of the people'. Andreĭ Vladimirovich Golovnev and Gail Osherenko, *Siberian Survival: The Nenets and Their Story* (Ithaca, 1999), p.2.
[12] Slezkine, p.53.
[13] Andrei A. Znamenskii, "The 'ethic of empire' on the Siberian borderland: the peculiar case of the 'rock people', 1791-1878, in Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby M. Schrader and Willard Sunderland (eds)*, Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies, 38 (Abingdon, 2007), p.116.
[14] Ibid.

distinctions between Russians and natives, but also between different native groups. The *inorodtsy* were divided into three distinct categories "according to the different levels of their civic education and present way of life". These were "settled, that is, those who live in towns and settlements", who had the same legal obligations as Russian peasants except military service; "nomadic, those who occupy places depending on the season" who were to be left alone within their own territories but continue to pay *yasak* and local taxes; and "wandering, or foragers (*brodyachie ili latsi*), that is, those who move from one place to another" with no obligation beyond the *yasak* payment and no Russian administration within their lands.[15] In keeping with the labyrinthine nature of tsarist social designations, there were no precise criteria provided with the statute, merely instructional examples. Moreover, the hope was that native groups would move between categories as their 'enlightenment' progressed.[16] Paragraph 57 of the statute also indicated "that 'nomadic aliens' could move from *inorodtsy* to the ranks of state peasants, the burgher (*meshchane*) estate, and even to merchant guilds."[17] This at least implied a limited degree of social mobility, even if it was extremely difficult in reality.

However whilst *inorodtsy* (*inorodets* in the singular) remained a distinct legal category from 1822 until the fall of the empire in 1917, it was also increasingly used as an informal, pejorative term for the non-Russian inhabitants of the empire.[18] John W. Slocum has detailed how "in its original juridical sense, the term referred to the not-yet-assimilated peoples of Russia's Asian borderlands, [but] by the early twentieth century the term carried the connotation of the non-assimilable peoples of all the borderlands."[19] This notion of separateness would also endure, as the 1892 Statute of Alien Administration "almost exactly repeated the text of the Speranskii legislation," and "even the general modernisation drive in Russia that demolished traditional indigenous

[15] *Ustav ob upravlenii inorodtsev* (St Petersburg, 1822) quoted in Slezkine, pp. 83-4.
[16] Slezkine, p. 84.
[17] Znamenski, "The ethic of empire", p.116.
[18] Slocum, p.173.
[19] Ibid., p.174.

administrations in Siberia between 1910 and 1913 ... maintained the indigenous population in the tributary category."[20] All native tribes fared differently in the face of Russian rule and settlement. Some, such as the Ostiaks, Voguls and Kamchadals fled the Russian advance and paid a heavy price in terms of poverty, disease, and hunger. Others, such as the Kirghiz, Buriats, Yakuts and Tungus fared much better.[21]

The natives of Irkutsk province

Known prior to the Russian conquest as 'Khalkas', the name 'Buriat', or 'Buryad' as it once was, was an umbrella term for several Mongol peoples such as the Bugalat, Khora, Ekhirit and Khongodor.[22] By the late imperial period, they were split between nomadic pastoralists to the east of Lake Baikal and sedentary farmers to the west. This same split was mirrored in religious belief; most of those in the east practiced Tibetan Buddhism or 'Lamaism', whilst the Irkutsk Buriats either retained traditional shamanic religions, had converted (at least nominally) to Russian Orthodoxy, or often practiced a syncretic mixture of both.[23] Their language was based on Classic Mongolian with strong influences of Chinese, Sanskrit, Tibetan, Manchurian and others. The western Buriats were largely illiterate, while those in the east retained the use of the Mongolian alphabet.[24] When the Russians arrived in 1627, it marked the beginning of a campaign to convert the nomadic Buriats to both settled agriculture and Russian Orthodoxy. The former was more successful, though the Buriats in the late imperial period reflected a wide range of social,

[20] Znamenski, "The ethic of empire", p.116.
[21] Lincoln, *Conquest of a Continent*, p.160.
[22] Barbara A. West, *Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Asia and Oceania* (New York, 2009), pp.132-3; Alfred J. Rieber, 'The Complex Ecology of Complex Frontiers', pp. 177-209, quoted in *Imperial Rule*, Pasts Incorporated, v. 1 (Budapest, 2004), footnote 73, p.206.
[23] Yeshen-Khorlo Dugarova-Montgomery and Robert Montgomery, 'The Buriat Alphabet of Agvan Dorzhiev', in Stephen Kotkin and Bruce A. Elleman (eds), *Mongolia in the Twentieth Century: Landlocked Cosmopolitan* (New York, 1999), p.80.
[24] James Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia: Russia's North Asian Colony 1581-1990* (Cambridge, 1994), p.85.

economic and cultural experiences. Some retained their traditional way of life and religious customs by continuing to eke out a living in increasingly marginal pastoral areas. Others settled and became prosperous farmers, and some converted to Orthodoxy. The Buriats were the focus of a civilising mission which resembled the treatment of both colonised peoples elsewhere in Russia and the wider world, and also of Russian-Siberian peasants and workers.

The 1897 census listed the following subject population groups as present in Irkutsk province:

> Russian - comprising Great Russian, Little Russian (Ukrainian), and Belorussian; Polish; Other Slavic; Lithuanian-Latvian; Romanian; German; Other Germanic; Other Indo-European - comprising Armenian and Kartvelian; Caucasian highlanders - including Circassians; Finnish - including Mordovian; Turko-Tatar - comprising Tatar, Kirghiz-Kaisak and Yakut; Mongol-Buriat; Other eastern languages; Other northern tribal - including Tungus; Other languages; Not-specified.[25]

Citizens of other states, including 'Asiatic' kingdoms like China, Korea and Japan, were listed separately.[26] Outside of the ethnic Russians, the Buriats were by far the largest and most prominent native group in Irkutsk province. Early Russian censuses, such as the East Siberian census of 1699, did not include native peoples in their headcounts, but the Siberian Branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (SIRGS) estimated that there were 200 000 Mongol-Buriats in the whole of East Siberia in 1865.[27] Though notoriously unreliable, the 1897 census recorded a native population of 288 633 in Irkutsk

[25] *Pervaya Vseobshaya Perepis' Naseleniya Rossiiskoy Imperii, 1897, LXXV.* In N.A Troinitskovo (ed.), *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, LXXV (St Petersburg, 1904), p.60.
[26] Ibid., p.28.
[27] K. Stukov, 'Ocherki Mongoloburyat', Kochuyushchikh v Vostochnoi Sibiri', *Zapiskii Sibirskogo otdel Imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obschestvo*, 1865, p.121.

province, of whom 110 000 were Buriats, from a general population of 515 070.[28]

The first historical record of the Buriats was as one of the "People of the Forest" conquered by Jochi, the son of Genghis Khan, as related in the 1240 chronicle *The Secret History of the Mongols*.[29] Historically, they traced their lineage to Genghis Khan's mother, who was from Barguzinsky on the eastern shore of Lake Baikal.[30] Like the majority of the Mongol clans not under Russian rule, they converted from shamanic beliefs to Tibetan Buddhism in the seventeenth century.[31] Shaping a legitimising historical narrative was an important facet of imperial practice. While advocates of the *starozhily* based their case on the supposedly historically proven noble deeds of pioneers and common people, others also denigrated the claims of non-Russians. Writing on depictions of the First Nations in British Columbia, Chad Reimer has noted how "the result of... modern, European-defined history's privileging of written records as constitutive of civilisation was that the province's historians viewed the past through European eyes."[32] Similarly, many Russians such as K. Chudovskii, a researcher for the SIRGS, believed that for nomadic, tribal societies like the Buriats, history did not 'begin' until the arrival of the Europeans. Through the lens of mid-nineteenth century scientific 'objectivity', he went further than the observers of the First Nations and dismissed the written historical record of "Mongolian and Chinese chroniclers", and also early Russian officials, as "extremely sketchy, erroneous and contradictory".[33] Citing the theory of the German geographer Karl Ritter (1779-1859),

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[28] *Izdanie Irkutskogo Peresenelcheskogo Rayona, Opisanie Irkutskoy Guberny, Spravochnaiia Knizhka Dlya Khodokov I Pereselentsev* (Irkutsk, 1913), p. 4. There were another 170 000 Buriats in Transbaikal Oblast', out of 672 072 people: Dugarova-Montgomery and Montgomery, p. 80.

[29] Paul Kahn, *The Secret History of the Mongols: The Origin of Chinghis Khan (expanded Edition): An Adaptation of the Yüan Ch'ao Pi Shih, Based Primarily on the English Translation by Francis Woodman Cleaves* (Boston, MA, 1998), p.136.

[30] West, p.132.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Chad Reimer, *Writing British Columbia History, 1784-1958* (UBC Press, 2010), p.65.

[33] K. Chudovskii, 'Istorino-Etnograficheskoy Ocherk Irkutskoy Guberny', *Zapiskii Sibirskogo otdel Imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obschestvo* (Irkutsk, 1865), №8, p.78.

Chudovskii proposed that "the resettlement of the Buriats from their common homeland in Transbaikalia" occurred "after the point when Genghis Khan united all the Mongol tribes around his throne" but "several centuries before the Russians [came]... for at the time of the arrival of the Russians, the Buriats already considered themselves the indigenous natives (*korennimi tuzemtsami*) of the country." [34] However, Chudovskii's historical narrative may be less accommodating than it initially appears. It defined "the Buriats, Tungus, Yakuts, Karagazov" as "newcomers (*prishcheltsami*) at different times, like the Russians" and discounted the hypothetical, ancient 'Chud' aborigines (*aborganii*) of the area as merely "stories ... [that] should be attributed to mythical history; science and geography rely on indisputable facts." [35] This argument was seemingly designed to legitimise the Russian conquest of "the country currently occupied by Irkutsk province" by presenting what came before as essentially unknowable or unimportant.[36] Writing for the same body, the exiled regionalist historian and ethnographer A.P. Shchapov, himself half-Buriat, categorised as "not quite plausible" the claim by Buriats in that area that they "had their origin (as far as they can recall it) from one of fifteen pioneers ... [though] the present-day Buriats do not remember them, and have no reliable genealogical history on them... Only in the first Abyzov genus did the old Buriats recall to us traditions that predated Genghis Khan (1154 to 1227)." [37] These arguments are especially revealing in the context of the rhetorical battles fought by advocates of the *starozhily* against encroachments by new settlers.

[34] Geschichte der Ost-Mogolen, von Smitt (St. Petersburg, 1826), p.75.
[35] Chudovskii, p.77.
[36] Ibid.
[37] A.P. Shchapov, 'Fizicheskoe Razvitie Verkholenskogo Naseleniya', *Izvestia Sibirskogo otdel Imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obschestvo*, VII (1876), p.37.

Civilisation and Russification

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw the growing influence of imported European ideas of a 'civilising mission', which from the 1840s onwards became a "central feature of Russian national identity" across the ideological spectrum.[38] The antecedents of this *mission civilisatrice* have been discerned in the "messianic, or providentialist, vision" of the first European empires, Portugal and Spain, which aimed to spread Catholicism to, and exploit the natural resources of, South America and the West Indies.[39] Mikhail Khodarkovsky and Robert P. Geraci have traced Russia's interventionist impulse back to the Orthodox evangelism and messianism of the Grand Duchy of Muscovy. They draw explicit comparison with both the overseas imperial excursions and the continental *Reconquista* undertaken by its Iberian contemporaries.[40] In Irkutsk, this same message was most fully expounded by the famed explorer, geographer and head of the IRGS, P.P. Semenov Tian-Shanskii (1827-1914). He was eager to stake a place for Russia and Muscovy in the forging of the "ring of colonisation by European races that have swept the globe".[41] Semenov stressed what he saw as the chronological and thematic commonalities between the time when "the Muscovite Rus', under the glorious reign of Ivan III, threw off the yoke of the Tatar… [and] marked the beginning of... the Russian colonisation movement to the south east in the interior of the Old World" and "the epoch of the opening of America" by "the Spanish Conquistadors in the New World".[42]

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[38] Mark Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1865*, Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography, 29 (Cambridge, 1999), pp.52-5.
[39] John Huxtable Elliott, *Spain, Europe & the Wider World, 1500-1800* (New Haven, CT, 2009), p.138 [viewed 05/05/2014] http://site.ebrary.com/lib/uon/Doc?id=10373449.
[40] Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier the Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington, 2002), p.2; See also Slezkine, pp. 38-9; Robert P. Geraci and Mikhail Khodorkovsky, 'Introduction', in Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (eds), *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca,, 2001), p.1.
[41] P.P. Semenov, 'Znachenie Rossii v Kolonizatsionnom Dvizhenii Evropeyskih Narodov', *Izvestia Imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obschestvo*, XXVIII (1892), p.353.
[42] Ibid.

Geraci and Khodarkovsky contend that this Orthodox messianism never disappeared, but was simply overlain with newer theories like the civilising mission and nationalism.[43] The modern *mission civilisatrice* which blanketed so much of the rhetoric of New Imperialism and was routinely used by European empires to justify exploitative practices has been dated to the time of the French Revolution through to the reign of Napoleon III, during which time "having one's own 'aliens' to civilise and transform was an attribute of an empire-building people."[44] Combined with the increasing influence of scientific anthropology, the start of the late imperial period saw a hardening of attitudes towards native peoples. Toleration of so-called 'savage' practices decreased; natives who had heard the gospel and forsaken it were increasingly portrayed as subversive heretics shirking the gift of civilisation, not sympathetic ingénues in need of guidance. Becoming 'Russian' became synonymous with a vaguely defined, open-ended Europeanising 'enlightenment' which was seen as possible rather than inevitable.[45] Works like John Stewart Mill's *On Nature* (1874) used the supposed backwardness of imperial peoples to overturn Rousseau's idealisation of "living in accordance with Nature", which had informed Catherine II's policy of 'enlightened' toleration from 1773 and also Romantic-era ideas of the 'noble savage'.[46] Under these altruistic auspices, nineteenth-century science, politics and moralism were banded together to create more actively interventionist policies for purportedly 'primitive'

[43] Geraci and Khodorkovsky, p.1.

[44] Geraci, p.75; Following the fall of Napoleon III, the nascent French Republic used on a selective interpretation of 1789 and beyond to push its supposedly unique claim to carry out la mission civilisatrice in an attempt to "reconcile its aggressive imperialism with its republican ideals. See Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, CA, 1997), p.3; Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient:The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford, 2011), p.27.

[45] Slezkine, pp.59-60.

[46] "The ways of nature are to be conquered, not obeyed": J.S. Mill "On Nature", pp.7-33 in *Nature, The Utility of Religion and Theism* (London, 1904) p.14, p.33. Andrei A. Znamenski, *The Beauty of the Primitive: Shamanism and Western Imagination* (Oxford, 2007) [viewed on 12/09/2014] http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/oso/public/content/religion/9780195172317/toc.html; Slezkine, pp.60-3.

societies.[47] Moreover, increasingly widespread Social Darwinist ideas inverted the concept of 'natural laws' to claim that natural selection would lead to, and justified, the 'degeneration' and 'dying out' (*vimiraniya*) of so-called primitive peoples. This was the shared fate that some of the more blustering proponents of the *novosely*, like the reactionary publicist Pyotr Evgenevich Astaf'ev, believed awaited both the *inorodtsy* and *starozhily*. [48] This "cultural Russification" peaked in the final decades of the nineteenth century, borne along by the rising tide of popular nationalism.[49] Yet even though the tsarist regime remained resolute in its resistance to other nationalities before the First World War, it implemented only "limited, contradictory" Russification policies and remained ambivalent towards the concepts of both 'official' and popular, ethno-centric Russian nationalism.[50]

Religion

In the Russian Empire, ideas of spreading civilisation and enlightenment versus protecting the 'purity' of indigenous society were, as seen in the previous two chapters, applied as frequently to the 'dark masses' of the *narod* as they were to non-Russian peoples. As such, the relationship between being 'Russian' and being 'civilised' was fraught with ambiguity. The tsars based their claim to power on divine ordination, and they ruled a heterogeneous mixture of ethnicities, religions, wealth and status across a territory spanning thousands of miles from Poland to the Pacific. Moreover, the continued existence of the *soslovie* system meant that these diverse peoples were imperial subjects with different estate-based privileges, not citizens with any kind of universal legal

[47] Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur, "Introduction", in Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur (eds), *Promoting the Colonial Idea: Propaganda and Visions of Empire in France* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.3.
[48] 'K *Voprosu o Vliyany Pereselentsev* Na Zemledel'cheskoe Naselenie Sibiri', *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, 8 September 1891, №37, p.1.
[49] Geraci, p.77.
[50] Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I*, Russian Research Center Studies, 94 (Cambridge, MA, 2003), p.6.

rights. Throughout the history of the Russian Empire, there was never any legal definition on being or becoming 'Russian', and the estate system became increasingly distorted by social change and imperial expansion.[51] Yuri Slezkine has described how in the Muscovite period, it was a 'Russian' lifestyle and service to the tsar which marked the parameters of belonging.[52] He contends that it was actually Peter the Great's recasting of his Grand Duchy into a European-style empire which shifted the definition to a confessional one, as religion was the clearest boundary between Russians and subject peoples sharing a common landmass already stretching to the Far East.[53] But state policy towards other faiths was not consistent, and the "triangular" relationship between church, state and minority faiths meant that proselytisation was often subordinated to political or social expediency.[54]

All of these factors, and the enduring image of the Russian peasant as an Orthodox Christian, made the concept of 'Russification' (*obrusenie*), whether state driven or privately imagined, a problematic one. Alexei Miller has described it as "a whole cluster of various processes and interactions that often differ not in some minor detail in the manifestation of a general principle but in their inner logic and nature," adding that "some attributed a key role to the Orthodox religion, others to the language and culture, still others to race and blood. As a consequence, the ideas of measurements, instruments and goals of Russification diverged, too."[55] There were also more practical concerns, such as the so-called "Islamic problem" in Crimea and Central Asia. Conversion and apostasy rates were worryingly low and high respectively, and world

[51] See Gregory L. Freeze, 'The Soslovie (Estate) Paradigm and Russian Social History', *The American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), p.11 [viewed 22/02/2012] Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1867233.
[52] Yuri Slezkine, "Savage Christians or Unorthodox Russians? The Missionary Dilemma in Siberia", in Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine (eds), *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture* (New York, 1993), pp.16-17.
[53] Ibid., p.17.
[54] Peter Waldron, 'Religious Toleration in Late Imperial Russia', in Olga Crisp and Linda Harriet Edmondson (eds), *Civil Rights in Imperial Russia* (Oxford, 1989), pp.103-19 quoted in; Geraci and Khodorkovsky, pp.5-6.
[55] Alexei Miller, *The Romanov Empire and Nationalism*, trans. by Serguei Dobrynin, English Ed. Revised and Enlarged (Budapest, 2008), pp. 45, 55-6.

religions like Islam, Buddhism and Judaism offered alternative points of allegiance beyond the state. A Jesuit mission had existed just over the border from Irkutsk province in China since the early sixteenth century, and there was also a short-lived Catholic mission in Siberia.[56] A state-sponsored Russian Orthodox missionary society was not founded until 1865. However, it was under the patronage of Empress Maria Alexandrova, meaning that "the mission was officially declared a part of government policy" in the struggle against Islam, Lamaism and shamanism.[57]

The faith of subjugated peoples like the shamanist Irkutsk Buriats or their Lamaist brethren across Baikal attracted a great deal of attention. Forced religious conversion had been a tool of empire building since the Romans, and the Russian history of this practice was certainly ignominious. Siberian authorities had long been wary of the competition with Jesuits and lamas for conversion of Buriats and other Siberian natives.[58] The history of Buriat religion in Russian Irkutsk province was generally one of repression. Compulsory, mass conversions began in the eighteenth century. One such event was staged for the benefit of Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich during his visit to Irkutsk in 1873.[59] A.D. Goremykin's tenure as Governor-General saw him ignore "Buriat petitions complaining of forced baptisms and violence" in favour of an aggressive renewal of the policy as an attempt to head off the inroads made by Lamaism. This strategy apparently greatly pleased the tsesarevich Nikolai Alexandrovich during his visit in 1891.[60] It was not until the promulgation of the 1905 Edict of Toleration that religious coercion was finally ended. Vera Tolz has stated that this was categorically not freedom of worship or "freedom of

[56] Anna Peck, 'Between Russian Reality and Chinese Dream: The Jesuit Mission in Siberia, 1812-1820', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 87 (2001), pp.17-33.
[57] Dittmar Schorkowitz, 'The Orthodox Church, Lamaism, and Shamanism among the Buriats and Kalmyks, 1825-1925', in Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (eds), *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2001), p.203.
[58] Ricarda Vulpius, "The Russian Empire's civilising mission in the eighteenth century: A comparative perspective", in Tomohiko Uyama (ed.), *Asiatic Russia: Imperial Power in Regional and International Contexts* (Oxon, 2012), p.20.
[59] Schorkowitz, p.213.
[60] Ibid, p.211.

conscience", and permission to convert applied only to Christian churches.[61] However, Paul W. Werth has argued that this permission was broader than previously recognised. Irkutsk Buriats were allowed to return to Buddhism, and in 1908 the Interior Ministry affirmed the legality of conversion to Islam.[62]

The longevity of forced conversion did not mean it was successful. Two years after the Edict of Toleration, the Irkutsk-educated publicist M.N. Bogdanov, an ethnic Buriat from Ukir *ulus'* in the northern Baikal region, wrote that since "the Russian administration and Orthodox missions … instilled Christianity by coercion and violence ... [i]t is quite natural that the decree on freedom of religion has caused the Buriat masses, who are nominally Orthodox but profess Buddhism, to move in the direction of their old religion and publicly reject Orthodoxy."[63] There was concern that 'converted' Buriats should worship in line with Orthodox dogma and any vestiges of shamanic practice should be expunged. Yet this policy was generally recognised as ineffective even at the time, succeeding only in creating what Yuri Slezkine has called "a substantial group of Christians who were indistinguishable from pagans."[64] Bogdanov claimed that "In Alari in Irkutsk province, three religions co-exist side by side and often the same individual will be involved in all three, paying for the maintenance of the [Orthodox] church and [Buddhist] university monastery

[61] Ibid, pp.213, 215; Geraci and Khodorkovsky, p.7.
[62] Werth characterises the period from the reign of Catherine (1762-96) through to the death of Nicholas I in 1855 as one where "Orthodoxy remained explicitly the "predominant" faith of the empire" but also saw the creation of a "multiconfessional establishment" whereby institutions and frameworks were enshrined in law to mediate between state and religions, and integrate the latter into the former. Paul W. Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia* (Oxford, 2014), pp.4, 242.
[63] M. Bogdanov, 'Buriatskoe "Vozrozhdenie"', *Sibirskie Voprosui*, 3 (1907), p.39. Mikhail Nikolaevich Bogdanov (1878-1920) has been described as the "outstanding representative of the pre-revolutionary Buriat intelligentsia, a scholar, social activist, publicist, and one of the leaders of the Buriat nationalist movement." He was associated with the Social Democrats, devoted much time to the study of various nomadic Mongolian peoples and published his findings in a number of essays for the East Siberian IRGS and *Sibir'* under different pseudonyms. B.V. Bazarov and L.B. Zhabaeva, *Buryatskiie natsional'nie demokrati i obshchestvenno-politicheskaia misl' mongol'skikh narodov v pervoi treti XX veka* (Ulan-Ude: IMBT, 2008), p.74 [viewed 06/08/2014] http://books.google.co.uk/books?vid=ISBN9785792502703.
[64] Slezkine, p.57.

(*datsan*), as well as for the [shamanic] sacrifices."[65] Whilst the two processes were obviously not the same, concern for religious purity and the use of Orthodoxy as a moral framework was reminiscent of attitudes towards the 'dual faith' peasantry.

Education and culture

Although the state's proselytising efforts often proved ineffective, there was widespread belief in the power of Russian civilisation to bring about what Richard Wright has called the "acculturation" of native peoples, "a process in which one group becomes more like another by borrowing discrete cultural traits... under conditions in which a dominant group is largely able to dictate correct behaviour to a subordinate group."[66] This notion was not just the preserve of the more particularist neo-Slavophiles but also the empire's emerging liberal intelligentsia, many of whom sought to apply anthropological theories of modernisation to the 'dark' *narod*, the emerging urban proletariat and the *inorodtsy*.[67] This was especially true of the so-called 'Westernisers', who sought wide-ranging reforms along European lines and were often hostile to the established church.[68] In his study of Russification policies employed on the Kazaks, Robert P. Geraci states that documentary evidence proves that the Ministry of Education actively studied the educational models of French Algeria and British India in drafting the 1870 law on native schooling.[69] Education provision was a common focal point for imperial administrations seeking to impose order. In her comparative study of attempts by the British government to educate Scottish Highlanders and Native Americans in the

[65] M. Bogdanov, 'Buriatskoe "Vozrozhdenie"', p.42.
[66] Thomas M. Barrett, 'Lines of Uncertainty: The Frontiers of the Northern Caucasus', in Jane Burbank and David L. Ransel (eds), *Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington, 1998), p.157.
[67] Vera Tolz, *Russia: Inventing the Nation* (London, 2001), p.200.
[68] John L. Comaroff, "Images of Empire, Contests of Conscience. Models of Colonial Domination in South Africa," in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds) *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, 1997), p.181.
[69] Geraci, p.139.

eighteenth century, Margaret Szasz wrote that "When a society surrenders control of the education of its youth, the people relinquish much of their capacity to survive as a unique culture... the efforts of European colonial powers to re-educate the children of a colonised people proved a crucial measure of their success."[70] In late imperial Siberia, the debate surrounding *inorodtsy* education was shaped by the renowned Orientalist scholar Nikolai Ivanovich Il'minskii (1822-91), a native of Penza in central European Russia. Much like observers of the peasantry, he characterised the *inorodtsy* in infantilised terms as "history's outcast stepsons" (*pasinki istorii*) in need of moral instruction and whole-life Russification.[71]

However, as state education was only available to half the empire's eligible child population by 1917, much of what was provided was in the hands of the church.[72] In Irkutsk, Bishop Veniamin Blagonravova, head of the Transbaikal mission based in the city, dictated church policy towards the *inorodtsy.* As may be expected, he believed in the continued primacy of faith as a marker of 'Russian' identity and that any accommodation of *inorodtsy* culture did not produce genuine Russians. As a friend and contemporary of Il'minskii, only differing on the issue of language discussed below, Veniamin's methods also contained a whole-life element referencing what he held were the key tropes of Russian identity that he sought to impart:

> We give [each convert] a Russian first name and a Russian last name (the godfather's), we cut off the long hair, and if there are the means we dress him in Russian clothing. Our convert becomes *not* a 'newly baptised Buriat' (*novokreshchenny buriat*) but a *Russian*! He is ashamed to be called a Buriat, avoids the Buriats with their long hair, and joins the Russians. He can speak Russian,

[70] Margaret Szasz, *Scottish Highlanders and Native Americans: Indigenous Education in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Norman, OK, 2007), p.3.
[71] For a detailed analysis of the Il'minskii system and its rival, the more language oriented Russian-Tatar school system, see Geraci, pp.61-157.
[72] Joseph I. Zajda, *Schooling the New Russians: Transforming Soviet Workers to Capitalist Entrepreneurs* (Albert Park, Australia, 2006), p.3.

> though poorly. We teach him prayers in Russian. A translation is made for clarification, nothing more.[73]

However, Veniamin himself was unable to sustain belief in the supposedly successful and total Russification imparted by these methods. He felt that these even his approach had only produced another splinter group, baptised Buriats who "begin to form their own society, separate from the Buriats but still not united with the Russians, even though they call themselves Russians."[74]

In pursuing complete control of Buriat education in Irkutsk province, Lamaist datsans were relentlessly persecuted. This began under Nicholas I, when the Governor-General of East Siberia Nikolai Nikolaevich Murav'ev-Amurskii (1809-1881) reduced the number of lamas in East Siberia from 4 546 to 285 and forbade an increase on the existing thirty-four datsans. In Irkutsk province, attempts by lamas to proselytise the shamanic or nominally Orthodox Buriats were dealt with harshly, with sanctions including corporal punishment and the destruction of datsans. Successive Governors-General continued this policy up until the issuance of the Edict of Toleration in 1905, by which time Russian policy "had effectively severed most Western Buriats from their Buddhist brethren, and so cut them off from the common Mongolian cultural environment."[75]

Just as he had with the peasantry, A.P. Shchapov saw the modernisation of the remote Buriat settlements of Irkutsk province in the 1870s as both a template for reform and a corrupting influence leading to the development of "mutually antagonistic, egoistic acquisitive competition and competitiveness" (*vzaimno antagonistichnoi egoistichesk priobretatel'noi sovrevnovatel'nosti i konkurentsy*).[76] His list of potential beneficial uses for the profits from local

[73] Veniamin, "Arkhiepiskora Veniamina Irkutskogo s N.I. Il'Minskii", PS, July-August 1905, app.13, quoted in Geraci, p.73.
[74] Geraci, pp.13-14
[75] Schorkowitz, p.206.
[76] A.P. Shchapov, 'Selskaiia Osedlo-Inorodcheskaia i Russko-Krestyanskaia Obschina v Kudinsko-Lenskom Krae', *Izvestia Sibirskogo otdel Imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obschestvo*, VI (1875), p.107.

taverns blended both a strong characterisation of the Buriats as savages with the demand for modern institutions: "the founding and improvement of schools, communal loans and savings banks, agricultural equipment, coach station, cattle breeding, crafts, trade and other associations or cooperatives, or on communal shops, etc. ... would be the gradual, peaceful, lively and vigorous revival of these semi-wild, primitive, coarse settled *inorodtsy* communities."[77] For his part, in the early twentieth century Mikhail Bogdanov also called for an increase in secular education at the expense of the datsans, as part of a wider 'civilising' process very similar to what Shchapov had suggested for both peasants and aliens three decades previously:

> A common Buriat culture, the spread of education and professionally-organised medical care in the Buriat encampments are the means by which we can snatch the Buriats from the darkness of ignorance, free them from the exorbitant financial cost of religious affairs, and save them from the disease of alcoholism, and from extinction... The introduction among us of a caste of lamas dependent on our society ... is less than desirable.[78]

Whilst Il'Minskii's plan was therefore not especially controversial in its aims, his insistence on instruction and even church services in native languages was. As mentioned earlier, language increasingly came to be seen as a key arbiter of nationality over the nineteenth century.[79] However, Il'Minskii's policy gained the support of the Ministry of Education and had an influential ally in the reactionary Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod, Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev (1827-1907). As such, the Il'minskii system of education was introduced in 1870, permitting instruction in the native vernacular by native teachers and translations of religious texts into Cyrillic. This was followed in 1882 by the translation of religious liturgy into native languages. The Il'minskii

[77] Ibid., p.119.
[78] M. Bogdanov, 'Buriatskoe "Vozrozhdenie"', p.44.
[79] See 'Official Nationalism and Imperialism' in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed (London, 2006), pp.86-114.

system became a key component of imperial policy towards non-Muslim natives in Siberia and the Volga-Ural regions. This represented a significant turnaround from just a few years earlier, when an imperial edict issued by Alexander II in 1864 stipulated that all education take place in Russian.[80] However this should not be seen as a conversion to Romantic, Orientalist toleration. Native languages were indulged because unlike the Poles or Ukrainians in the western borderlands, the *inorodtsy* in sparsely populated Siberia were not perceived as a threat to the integrity of the empire, and the policy was implemented solely as a means of promoting more effective Russification.[81]

However, the tsarist state's belief in the power of language as a potential unifying force can be seen in the decision to restrict the import of books from China and the refusal to lift the ban on education in the "superdialectical" Classical Mongolian language.[82] Similar linguistic Russification policies were attempted in Poland in 1863 following the failure of the January Uprising, and the promulgation of the 1876 Ems *Ukaz* which banned use of the Ukrainian language for all official and cultural use.[83] The importance of language has traditionally been associated with 'ethnic' nationalisms in states such as the German Reich, the Russian Empire and Serbia.[84] However, in recent years the distinction between this and the so-called 'civic' nationalism supposedly embodied by Britain and France has been eroded as the importance attached to cultural indicators like language as a means of belonging, even from the

[80] Geraci, p.76.
[81] Ibid., p.61.
[82] The consistency between Classical Mongolian and various vernaculars made it especially suited to being a 'national' tongue, and therefore even more threatening; Dugarova-Montgomery and Montgomery, p.82.
[83] Sviatoslav Kaspe, 'Imperial Political Culture and Modernization in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century', pp.455-93, in Jane Burbank, Mark Von Hagen and Anatolyi Remnev (eds), *Russian Empire Space, People, Power, 1700-1930*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington, 2007), p.464 [viewed 31/12/2012] http://site.ebrary.com/lib/uon/Doc?id=10225107; Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto, 2000), p.283.
[84] See Roger Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), pp.132-46.

early years of the French Revolution, has become clear.[85] Rousseau's 'Essay on the Origins of Languages' (1781) had refreshed the ancient link between language and civilisation, and thus between incoherence and barbarism. However, whilst the Russians had worried about their own subjects 'falling away' and taking up native languages, this was in large part due to the great difficulty they had experienced in spreading the Russian language among native peoples across the empire.[86]

The limited acceptance of Il'Minskii's ideas, and the enduring importance of language, is perhaps best shown by the fact that native language was the criteria chosen for deciding national affiliation in the 1897 census.[87] In 1908, the regionalist ethnographer and journalist Ivan Innokentevich Serebrennikov (1882-1940), a native of Znamenskoe in Verkholensk county, claimed Veniamin's fears that vernacular education would create a splintering of the Buriats had been realised. Focused purely on issues of linguistic and cultural belonging, he discerned the splintering of two new types of people in between the Russians and *inorodtsy*;

> 'channelled' aliens (*'rusel'' inorodtsy*) [i.e.] those remaining within *soslovie* relations, but say nothing of the Russian language as their native tongue ... [and] 'alien-ised' Russians (*'ob'inorodchivalsiya' russkoi*), who remain under the cross but forget their mother tongue and who could consider it to be, for example, some kind of new-Yakut. The first result was in the vast majority of cases, the second is comparatively rare.[88]

From his perspective, Mikhail Bogdanov categorised the Buriat linguistic split another way. Also writing in 1908, he took issue with the 1897 census categories and called for the recognition of the category of "'multi-lingual'

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[85] Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover, NE, 2000), pp.15-20.
[86] Tolz, *Inventing the Nation*, p.176.
[87] P. Serebrennikov, 'Zaselennost Sibiri Russkimi', *Sibirskie Voprosui*, 1908, p.22.
[88] Ibid., p.23.

settled aliens" (*'raznoyazichnikh' osedlikh inorodtsev*), which he defined as the 2 130 people who were "referred to in the census as *inorodtsy*, but whose native tongue is Russian."[89] Others focused on the renewed links between language and civility, and claimed that as the business of the empire was conducted entirely in Russian, Buriat unwillingness or inability to learn it was a major barrier to their fully engaging with the state and therefore their Russification. An article in *Sibirskie Voprosui* in 1908 compared the supposedly smooth transition of the peasantry into the court system following the Great Reforms to the projected difficulties facing the *inorodtsy*: "The Russian peasant and the judge speak the same language, the judge is usually a local person, or someone who can easily get acquainted with the character of the area. It does not require any special rules."[90] The author believed the fact that "*Inorodtsy* almost never know the Russian language" was a harbinger of deeper, perhaps insuperable, cultural and legal estrangement:

> The aliens do not knows Russian laws ... [there is] no concept of a secular worldview among the legal traditions lying in the depths of a primitive people ... how will justice come when both sides, judges and tribes, are on different planets? Only mutual understanding builds trust, and there is a deep hole the somehow needs to be filled.[91]

This was related to the wider process of the dismantling of the steppe dumas and separate Buriat administration, a move they fiercely resisted. This reversal of previous policies of non-interference reflected the belief that "the desire not to interfere with the indigenous customs of these peoples" had fostered poor governance and criminal behaviour. [92]

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[89] M. Bogdanov, 'Zemleotvodniya Operatsy i Buryati Irkutskoy Guberny', *Sibirskie Voprosui*, 1908, p.30.
[90] R. Weissmann, 'Individualizatsiia Sibirskogo Prava', *Sibirskie Voprosui*, 1907, p.29; For an overview of peasant litigation in the late imperial period, see Gaudin.
[91] Ibid., pp.28-9.
[92] M.Z., 'Inorodcheskoe Upravlenie', *Vostochnoe Obozrenie*, 1891, №12, p. 2.

Agriculture

As bureaucrats, scholars and theologians debated the relative merits of language and religion as markers of *inorodtsy* 'Russianness', it seemed that engagement with settled, arable farming was a non-negotiable aspect. Given the deep-rooted and symbolic link between agriculture, peasanthood and notions of the *narod* as the essence of the Russian nation, this is unsurprising. David Moon has described how usually the Russian/*inorodtsy* confrontation is portrayed as a clash of two "lifeways" - the settled agriculture of the Russian peasants and the nomadic pastoralism of many of the natives.[93] This was a less apt comparison in the case of the Buriats of late imperial Irkutsk province. Many Buriats had been forcibly settled in the 1820s by the civil Governor and ally of Speranskii, Nikolai Ivanovich Treskin (1763-1842). Published in *Sibir'* in 1882, the anonymous three-part series 'Our Rural Economy' described how "from his time, the Buriats engaged in farming; they even planted entire desyatins of potatoes in view of the medals and kaftans."[94] The obvious implication was that having been coerced into a pseudo-sedentary agricultural life, the Buriats were at pains to ensure that their efforts were noticed. However, while admitting that "they remain good farmers", the author claimed that the facade had slipped and the Buriats had actually "cast off horticulture" by the time of writing.[95] The same notion of an innately nomadic Buriat was visible in the 1897 Irkutsk guidebook as the basis for a wider image of exoticism:

> They only became engaged in agriculture at the end of the last century. They have the habit of nomadic life, and retain it in the present day. In the summer they live in yurts, coal log buildings, with turf inside, without windows, and a hole in the top for smoke. In the middle of the yurt is a perpetual fire, boxes with household

[93] David Moon, 'Peasant Migration and the Settlement of Russia's Frontiers, 1550-1897', *The Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), p.882.
[94] 'Nashe Selskoe Khozyaistvo - 3', *Sibir'* (Irkutsk, 24 January 1882), №4, p.1.
[95] Ibid.

> goods line the walls. On a special shelf not opposite the door hands the household gods - *ongoni*. They are built away from each other, with no courtyard in between.[96]

These arguments were seemingly rooted more in ideology than reality. Whatever practical arguments were to be made in terms of knowledge and the suitability of steppe environments for raising animals, and despite the struggles of many of their Russian neighbours, Buriat pastoralism was taken as a sign of inferiority. This is despite the fact that even from the early 1880s there were numerous Russian sources producing statistical information claiming that "especially in Irkutsk province … the so-called nomadic aliens - the Buriats - constitute the most productive agricultural class among the rural inhabitants."[97] Reflecting the same capitalist imperative which sought to re-evaluate the *starozhily* in terms of their economic output, Buriats were often portrayed in these statistical treatments as more productive than Russian settlers, having greater areas of ploughed land and breeding almost twice as much livestock, all the while possessing only two and a half desyatins per person compared to four for the Russian population of Irkutsk province.[98] Contradicting the author of 'Our Rural Economy', in 1891 one correspondent to *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* went so far as to claim that the provincial food supply depended on the Buriats:

> The Irkutsk Buriats are almost all cultivators (*zemledeltsi*), with no little amount of grain more than the peasants. Not for nothing is Balagansk district, which is dominated by the Buriats, known as the breadbasket of the province (*zhitnitsei gubernii*). The same could be said of Verkholensk district. Also, the Tunkinsk Buriats, who had

[96] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, Ocherki Sibiri Dlya Narodnogo Chteniia, 1 (Irkutsk, 1897), p.27.
[97] 'Nerazreshenni Voprosi v Sfere Grazhdanskogo Upravleniia Sibiri', *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* (St Petersburg, 8 September 1883), №36, p.1.
[98] 'Osvedomlennost Stolichnikh Gazet', *Irkutskaya Gazeta*, 1913, №1 p.11; P. Bogdanov, 'Irkutskie Buryati i Zemleustroystvo', *Sibirskie Voprosui*, 1908, p.48; *Izdanie Irkutskogo Peresenelcheskogo Rayona, Opisanie Irkutskoy Guberny, Spravochnaiia Knizhka Dlya Khodokov I Pereselentsev*, p.6.

> eschewed farming until the 60s, now have a very respectable and abundant concern, and provide Irkutsk with its grain.[99]

However, even where the Buriats had fulfilled the remit of settled arable farmers, their transformation into 'Russians' was not seen as complete. Again, like the *starozhily*, their villages were seen as a somewhat incongruous hybrid: "On the winter roads, the Russian homes are lined up, and just off the post roads there is an approximation of a Russian *zaimka* with *yurts* and pasture."[100] Indeed, although the author of this article, known only as M.Z., stated that Buriat settlements "are nowadays representative of the Russian villages," their main point of reference was not the *starozhily*, but the Tatars of Minusinsk, Krasnoyarsk region.[101] This is reminiscent of Shchapov's characterisation of an *inorodets* merchant he encountered in Kudinsk, whose life he represented as an almost allegorical picture of the hybridisation of Buriat and Russian elements. Shchapov recalled "a newly baptised Buriat (*novokreshchennii buriat*), whose hut in the Ust-Orda settlement does not resemble the others. Rather he has built several [dwellings] in the Buriat style with his sister and wife in Buriat dress".[102]

Moreover, as the Irkutsk provincial economy became increasingly connected to imperial and international markets, peasants began to work in modern heavy industries such as mining and the railroads, as well as more traditional trades like logging, tanning and fishing. Consequently, in some areas a greater percentage of Buriats than Russian-Siberians were engaged in agriculture. For example, as an average across three of the counties of Irkutsk province - Irkutsk, Balagansk and Verkholensk - in 1908, the figures were 94.8% for Buriats and 72.4% for Russians.[103] However, whilst there were fears that the railroad would bring the corrosive influence of capitalism to bear on the

[99] M.Z., p.2.
[100] Ibid. A *zaimka* was a traditional *starozhily* frontier settlement occupied on the basis of the right of first possession.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Shchapov, 'Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaia Obschina', p.112.
[103] P. Bogdanov, p.46.

peasant commune, the movement of Buriat communities from its path was routinely portrayed as their "flight from civilisation", despite the presence of individuals like the wealthy Buriat traders mentioned above.[104]

Just as many observers and bureaucrats sought to transform what they saw as 'primitive' *starozhily* agricultural techniques to resemble those of the *novosely*, there were concerted efforts made to alter the economic function of the Buriats. Tapping into European ideas of teleological progress, Mikhail Bogdanov believed that the "severe crisis from the restructuring of the entire economy and way of life of the Buriat" was not born of any innate inability to adapt or compete, but was rather "only a transitory phenomenon, temporary discomfort, which should disappear as soon as the Buriats adapt to the new conditions of life".[105] He also believed, however, that a continuation of the policy of native dispossession in favour of new settlers would bring about a Darwinian end to his people:

> it is equally certain that… if the land survey work continues to be conducted on the same scale and with the same methods as now, the greater part of the Buriat *ulus'* will be simply destroyed, and as such intensify the process of the extinction of the Irkutsk Buriats.[106]

Reflecting the greater focus on socio-economic criteria or whole-life Russification, Bogdanov cited an 1887-9 census which included native peoples not only in the various *inorodtsy* categories, but also claimed for them the mantle of veteran peasants (*krest'yan-starozhily*). Usually the preserve of ethnic Russian-Siberians, in this instance it was defined as "all people of the peasant estate of various denominations. Government peasants, economic [peasants], peasants from the *inorodtsy* and those few resident *inorodtsy* who

[104] V. Vasiliev, 'Opasnie Opiti S Zemleustroystvom i Konolizatsiey v Sibiri', *Sibirskie Voprosui*, 3 (1907), p.7.
[105] M. Bogdanov, 'Zemleotvodniya Operatsy i Buryati Irkutskoy Guberny', p.31.
[106] Ibid.

are assigned to rural communities."[107] To drive home his claims for Buriat equality, Bogdanov argued that the members of the Speranskii-era grouping dubbed 'nomadic aliens' (*inorodtsy kochevikh*) "correspond to the first group of peasants" in their veteran status, in contrast to the parvenu categories of "newly-arrived peasants" (*novosely*) and "settlers" (*poselentsi*).[108]

The increasing competition between *starozhily* and *novosely* on the basis of economic performance and 'rational' use of the land was an echo of what had occurred with the arrival of the Russians in Siberia. The confiscation of land deemed by conquering forces to be 'empty' or 'underutilised' was a hallmark of European imperialism. The conceptualisation of this space as *terra nullius* was used to justify the seizure of resources under the pretence of having a moral duty to ensure they were used efficiently.[109] Such judgements were of course framed by colonial powers, and native peoples were rarely given a right of reply. The dispossession of the Irkutsk Buriats was based on just such 'rational' justifications, despite the fact that "the *inorodtsy* in many provinces have endowment certificates dating from the reigns of Alexis Mikhailovich, Elizaveta Petrovna, Catherine [the Great], and others, and quite legitimately believe that they own the land to which they have these property rights."[110] However, an imperial *ukaz* of 23rd May 1896 removed landholdings in Irkutsk province greater than fifteen desyatins from *inorodtsy* ownership and made them available for new settlers. This was extended to Transbaikalia in June 1900.[111] This shift towards a Russification of landholding continued with the law of 8th June 1901 which authorised the purchase of individual farmsteads in Siberia and stipulated that "to purchase land one cannot be *inorodtsy*, or persons who are not of Russian nationality: these same persons are denied the

[107] P. Bogdanov, pp.38-9. 'Economic peasant' was a category of state peasant created during the reign of Catherine II (1762-1796). They paid cash rent instead of traditional serf dues. They were subsumed into the category of state peasants at the end of the eighteenth century.
[108] Ibid.
[109] D.C.B. Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (London, 2000), pp.4-5.
[110] S. Ivanov, 'Zabluzhdenie Ili Fal'sifikatsiia', *Sibirskie Voprosui*, 1 (1906), p.50
[111] Dugarova-Montgomery and Montgomery, p. 82.

right to accept land as collateral and to receive lifetime tenure."[112] Having been dispossessed, the Irkutsk Buriats were then legally prohibited from buying back their own or any other land. The state's motivation was a combination of crude nationalism and tainted economic calculation. Mikhail Bogdanov described how 235 000 desyatins of land for twenty thousand *novosely* settlements in Balagansk, Irkutsk and Verkholensk counties were being taken "almost exclusively [from] within the confines of the *inorodtsy* departments."[113] He quoted the Resettlement Administration's justification for this, which was that their surveyors had "'anticipated with reasonable certainty a surplus in the land use of *inorodtsy*', as mentioned in the famous circular of the central administration of agriculture and land use."[114] Bogdanov again characterised the Buriats as *starozhily*, perhaps in an attempt to foster solidarity with the Russian-Siberian peasants who were suffering the same fate, though on a much smaller scale, at the hands of the Resettlement Administration acting on behalf of land-hungry settlers:

> Despite the fact that the State Duma has already pointed out the illegality and injustice of this gouging of the *starozhily* land, the Resettlement Administration has steadily pursued this policy... The Chief Superintendent of land management and agriculture has stated that in order to speed up the allotment of land in Siberia, he will submit to the State Duma 'a special law that greatly simplifies the procedure.'[115]

Race, inter-marriage and sexuality

> We are not Englishmen, who in India do their utmost to avoid mingling with the natives... Our strength, on the contrary, lies in

[112] Dim. Golovachev, 'Chastnoe Zemlevladeniye v Sibiri', *Sibirskie Voprosui*, 1905, p.122.
[113] M. Bogdanov, 'Zemleotvodniya Operatsy i Buryati Irkutskoy Guberny', p.26.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., p.28.

> the fact that up to the present time we have assimilated subject races, mingling affably with them.[116]

The growing prominence of racial science and policies was a characteristic feature of late-nineteenth century European imperialism. However, Ann Laura Stoler has noted that whilst there was overall an increasing trend towards discriminatory images and doctrines, racism was not always at the core of imperialisms and "the *quality* and *intensity* of racism varied enormously in different colonial contexts and at different historical moments".[117] Similarly, Nicholas Thomas has elaborated the differences between "discourses of discrimination", whereby prejudice could be based on skin colour, religion, language, socio-economic or many other factors; manifestations of racism are neither universal nor uniform due to the "particular traditions and vocabularies" of the groups and contexts in which they occur.[118] Much like the Irkutsk cultural project as a whole, racial formulations that emerged in East Siberia drew on over-arching theoretical networks and local conditions.

The growth of racial science in the nineteenth century complicated the role such ideas played in Russian conceptions of empire. Vera Tolz has noted how racial definitions of 'Russianness' crystallised in response to the growth of minority nationalism in the empire, but remained "on the margins of the Russian national debate" among the far-right fringe groups such as like the Union of the Russian People and the Union of the Archangel Michael.[119] Whilst Russian racial theories were not as pronouncedly hostile as in the USA or Germany for example, their cachet should not be downplayed. 'Ethnic origin' had been a census category since the eighteenth century. Moreover, Andrei A.

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[116] Colonel Mikhail Veniukov, *The Progress of Russia in Central Asia*, quoted in Tolz, *Inventing the Nation*, p.143.
[117] Ann Laura Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31 (1989), pp.135-6 [viewed 11/11/2011] http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500015693.
[118] Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge, 1994), p.14.
[119] V. Kabuzan, *Russkie v mire* (St Petersburg, 1996), quoted in Tolz, *Inventing the Nation*, p.193.

Znamenski has described how the start of 'official' colonisation in the late nineteenth century marked a watershed between "pre-industrial, imperial paternalism" and "the ideas and practices of 'modernity' - with its concepts of ethnicity, race, and administrative unity [which] gradually started to erode traditional Muscovite approaches to subject populations".[120] Furthermore, the sharpening of imperial competition with Japan and Chinese migration into Siberia added additional dimensions to perceptions of native Siberian peoples, many of whom had strong historical ties to the Middle Kingdom. However, Znamenski also conceded that despite increased inter-cultural interactions and the greater availability of the "trappings of modernity", the traditional "ethic of empire" was still evident in the continued existence of the tribute-payer (*yasak*) category until 1917 and the presence of "pure Russian settlers" such as the Bukhtarminsky or Kamenshchiki people within it.[121]

The treatment of women and inter-racial sexual relationships were loaded issues throughout the history of European imperialism. Moreover, the 'woman question' (*zhenskii vopros*) was problematised by educated observers much like the debates surrounding other 'problem' groups such as Jews, *inorodtsy* and workers. [122] On the back of the Great Reforms and increasing industrialisation, students of the *narod* perceived increasing tensions in peasant gender relations. As in other industrialising societies, urbanisation and wage labour had undermined traditional patriarchal family structures by affording greater freedoms to previously subjugated family members such as women and younger sons. Cathy Frierson has described how over the course of the nineteenth century, the Russian peasant woman (*baba*) was

[120] Andrei A. Znamenski, 'The "Ethic of Empire" on the Siberian Borderland: The Peculiar Case of the "Rock People," 1791-1878', in Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby M. Schrader, and Willard Sunderland (eds), *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies, 38 (Abingdon, 2007), p.106.
[121] Ibid., p.107.
[122] Wendy Rosslyn and Alessandra Tosi, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Lives and Culture* (Cambridge, 2012).

transformed from a “symbol of purity” into an agent of social upheaval.[123] To conservative commentators, the socially subversive female was the equivalent, and indeed helper, of the kulak. To liberal advocates of reform such as the historian and ethnographer Alexandra Yakovlena Efimenko and the economist and historian M.K. Gorbunova, they were a positive disruptive influence, a Virago.[124] However, the most common post-Emancipation images were of the *baba* as either a brutalised victim or "a persistent, nagging strategist who used every means at her disposal to break up the extended family of her husband" for her own gain.[125]

However, living as they did on the exoticised frontier of Russian settlement, Irkutsk's peasant women were also viewed in the context of Russian imperialism. Across the Great Power metropoles and empires, the role and treatment of women was used as a barometer of civility by those seeking to judge the merits of subject populations. It was also used to justify colonial intervention and the 'civilising mission'.[126] For example, the British imperial theorist Edward Gibbon Wakefield posited that property and marriage were the key factors in planting a British way of life in new environments.[127] This logic was held to be as true for peasants as it was workers and natives. Enlightenment thought had forged societies with clearly defined gender roles. In the French Republic, *The Declaration of the Universal Rights of Man* and new citizenship laws left no room for women in the public sphere. Their role was to be subordinate and domestic, with philanthropy as the absolute limit of acceptable activism. They were to be compensated for their powerlessness with ‘correct’ treatment, as defined by prevailing bourgeois morals. In practice,

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[123] Cathy A. Frierson, *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late Nineteenth Century Russia* (New York, 1993), pp.160-1.
[124] Frierson, *Peasant Icons*, p.164. Cathy A. Frierson, ‘Razdel: The Peasant Family Divided’, *The Russian Review*, 46 (1987), p.46. This term originated in the Vulgate Bible, from the Latin "'heroic woman, female warrior, from *vir*' 'man'". [viewed 24/07/2014] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/virago.
[125] Frierson, ‘Razdel’, p.46.
[126] Alice L. Conklin, *France and Its Empire Since 1870* (Oxford, 2014), p.96.
[127] Adele Perry, ‘Reproducing Colonialism in British Columbia, 1849-1871’, in Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton (eds), *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham, NC, 2005), p.146.

this was not feasible for working class families as many could not live on one wage.

Similarly, imperialism and colonisation were characterised as masculine endeavours, with the "strident misogyny of imperial thinkers and colonial agents" imported from the metropole.[128] The role of explorer, warrior, conqueror and ruler were believed to offer no scope for female involvement. On the contrary, European women in imperial societies were believed to be in physical, sexual and moral danger. From the seventeenth century, European governments often excluded metropolitan women from new settlements based on the belief that they would either flee or quickly die, whereas native women were apparently already attuned to local hardships.[129] This often led to a tremendous gender imbalance in frontier zones, leaving governments scrambling to control trans-cultural or mixed-race sexual activity.[130] Mixed-race children "wore away at the distinction between settlers and natives, and for that, this 'unofficial reproduction' was increasingly regulated during the nineteenth century" as governments in valued settler colonies "aspired to large colonial populations reproduced locally, preferably by European women."[131]

Depictions of peasant women produced in Irkutsk certainly reflected the influence of these transnational-imperial and Russian tropes. Describing the preferred pastimes of the Irkutsk peasant, the 1899 provincial guidebook stated that “Fighting is only permitted in a state of intoxication, and then they go home to their wives. It is rare that *muzhiks* under the influence of drink will not beat their women."[132] The image of peasant men beating their wives was strewn across rural sketches from local newspapers to the commanding

[128] Stoler, "Colonial Knowledge and Imperial Power", in Howe, p.178.
[129] Ibid., p.181.
[130] Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader and Willard Sunderland, ‘Russian Colonisations: An Introduction’, in Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader and Willard Sunderland (eds), *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies, 38 (Abingdon, 2007), p.11.
[131] Perry, p.145.
[132] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, p.46.

heights of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Anton Chekhov and Leo Tolstoy. Dostoevsky's *A Writer's Diary* contains a disturbingly graphic narrative of domestic abuse replete with routine beatings, starvation and psychological abuse. He described these activities as the peasant equivalent of what "aesthetic pleasures such as music theatres and magazines" are to the educated.[133] He portrayed peasant women as utterly powerless, without protection from the wider community: "A peasant beats his wife, inflicts injuries on her for many years, abuses her worse than his dog. In despair to the point of suicide and scarcely in her right mind, she goes to the village court. They send her away with an indifferent mumble: 'Learn to live together.'" [134] Dostoevsky's purportedly first-hand account concludes with the nameless woman taking her own life and her husband "tried and found deserving of mercy."[135] The low status of women was not new in Irkutsk province. Some twenty-five years earlier A.P. Shchapov wrote that "Labour at harvest time is so expensive that often [the peasant] sees his wife only as supplementary labour assisting in the busy times, and sometimes her work in the busy period is treasured more than the wife herself."[136] This metaphor was not extended to sons or parents; only the *baba* was marked for such subservience.

In light of this seemingly wretched existence, it is unsurprising that peasant women sought to change the village status quo. Predictably, female assertiveness was often poorly received by outside observers. Beatrice Farnsworth has demonstrated how from the 1870s, the image of the daughter-in-law (*snokha*) as a grasping troublemaker was well established in Russian society. Women were also often blamed for the increase in the separation of extended families.[137] This trend towards more frequent communal divisions was of great concern to the Irkutsk cultural class, just as it was for the wider Russian intelligentsia. Whilst abstract factors such as capitalism and tribal

[133] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *A Writer's Diary* (Evanston, IL, 2009), p.20.
[134] Ibid., p.19.
[135] Ibid., p.20.
[136] Shchapov, 'Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaia Obschina', p.109.
[137] Frierson, 'Razdel', p.46.

mixing were given ultimate responsibility, many accounts also reflected the image of the manipulative *snokha*. An 1885 *Sibir'* article entitled 'Peasant Divisions in Siberia' claimed that "Womanly quarrels only increase discord amongst brothers, though by themselves do not often serve at the pretext for division. If brothers live together, then a woman cannot separate them; how long does it take to calm a woman?"[138]

In his studies of the agricultural communities in his ancestral homeland of the Kudinsk-Lena region for the Siberian branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society in the mid-1870s, A.P. Shchapov described the lot of women in Buriat settlements in much the same way. He felt them to be in "a very depressed state" due to a life of incessant labour:

> Women walk to milk the cattle and mares, drive the cart, and also prepare and cook the food, skin the pelts, mend the clothes, reap, mow, and so on. One need only briefly visit a Buriat yurt to witness the depression, oppression and silence of the Buriat women as female slaves to their Buriat husbands. No wonder that women flee from their husband's yurt so often.[139]

Shchapov claimed that women who fled often moved to Russian villages, where they would seek to convert to Orthodoxy as a means of escape.[140] Yet in contradiction of the supposed Christianising, 'civilising' intentions of the tsarist state, this was not something that was encouraged. The reason was, predictably, financial; divided *inorodtsy* families were not usually self-sufficient, and would not produce future generations of tribute-payers which made it a double blow for the Treasury. Yuri Slezkine noted that as early as 1807, the Irkutsk provincial administration went so far as to issue a special

[138] 'Krestyanskie Razdeli v Sibiri', *Sibir'* (Irkutsk, 24 March 1885), №13-14, p.4.
[139] Shchapov, 'Fizicheskoye Razvitiye Verkholenskogo Naseleniya', p.61.
[140] Ibid.

decree proclaiming baptism fully compatible with all “traditional” Buriat customs except incest and polygamy.[141]

Ann Laura Stoler has described sexuality as the most common, and salacious, criterion for fostering racial stereotypes and judging the civility of natives and the lower classes in European society: "Long before conquest, tales of licentiousness, promiscuity, gynaecological aberrations, and general perversion marked out the 'Other' for metropolitan audiences."[142] Russian observers displayed a horrified fascination with native and peasant sexuality. Tales of exotic sexual wantonness were deeply troubling to Orthodox sensibilities. Many were scandalised by the alleged continuation of the practice of 'prostituted hospitality', whereby the sexual services of wives and daughters were offered to guests by some of the smaller native tribes in the northern reaches of East Siberia. The exiled Socialist Revolutionary Vladimir Zenzinov reported hearing tales of such activities during his time in the northern reaches of East Siberia, but did not witness it himself.[143] Most troubling of all were tales of incest. A "fourth generation Buriat elder of the Chernorudskii genus" reportedly told Shchapov that "people of our *ulus* were passed around like cattle; brother and sister mixed, father with daughter. The old folks say that's how it was in the past."[144] The thread between these two depictions, as reported acts rather than eyewitness testimony, was a common theme in travel writing, as seen in the descriptions of Irkutsk city in Chapter 1. In this way, notions of sexual otherness endured largely unchallenged and served as a means of reinforcing perceptions of the supposedly transgressive mores of colonised peoples.

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[141] Slezkine, pp.52-3.
[142] Stoler, p.179.
[143] Vladimir Zenzinov, *Road to Oblivion*, ed. by David Norman Collins, Siberian Discovery (Surrey, England, 2000), XI, p.54.
[144] A.P. Shchapov, ‘Fizicheskoe i Etnologo-Genealogicheskoe Razvitie Kudinskogo i Verkholenskogo Naseleniya [p.1]’, *Izvestia Sibirskogo otdel Imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obschestvo*, VI (1875), p. 195.

Reports of *starozhily* lapsing into such behaviour in isolated settlements far beyond the reproach of the Orthodox Church were used to bolster arguments of their alleged moral vacuity.[145] For example, the aforementioned tale of the kulak Zakhar Egorovich from an 1899 article in *Sibirskii Sbornik* reinforced his lack of morals by stating that he "occasionally indulges in amorous pleasures with the peasants' wives and daughters." [146] However, in spite of his proclivities, Zakhar Egorovich was portrayed as a "gallant fellow", his peccadillos somewhat explained by being sadly afflicted with a wife who was described in her youth as "already looking like a wet hen, old and wrinkled, and on whose frail shoulders a lot of hard, inhuman labour had been placed."[147] Similarly, there was a sharp contrast between P. Ivanov's depiction of Pasha the *khokhol* as the romanticised ideal of the peasant man, and his characterisation of Pasha's wife, a "fearful woman" (*strashennaya baba*) who was "distinguished by a rare ugliness. She was about 30 years old. Not very fat, but not thin, with smallpox scars across a red face. Her hands were too big and too red. Large black eyes, no eyebrows, but with a bovine aspect, and her lips were blue, cracked and thick. A gruff, clumsy voice produced an exceptionally repulsive sound."[148]

The relatively marginal influence of racialism on Russian imperialism is often attributed to the long-term interbreeding between Russian and non-Russian peoples in the periphery. As was common in the early years of imperial expansion, the small Russian population of seventeenth century Irkutsk was overwhelmingly male. A 1908 article from *Sibirskie Voprosui* claimed that the men grew so desperate that they "wrote pleadingly that they had no women... that they must bake bread themselves, and... 'we, Sire, are orphans, we would not even know [how to do] domestic work.'"[149] The solution to these men being denied what the author (named only as 'I.') called "the most basic

[145]Samuel Turner, *Siberia : A Record of Travel, Climbing, and Exploration*, 2nd edn (London, 1911), p.79 [viewed 14/09/2014] http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924028467474.
[146] Dumin, 'Bogatey (Rasskaz Iz Derevenskogo Byta)', *Sibirskii Sbornik*, 1899, p.42.
[147] Ibid., pp.42-3.
[148] P. Ivanov, 'Na Polyanke (Kartinka S Naturi)', *Sibirskii Sbornik*, 1894, p.52.
[149] I., 'Kulturnaya Rol Zhenschini v Sibiri', *Sibirskie Voprosui*, 1908, p.2.

necessities of life" was an imperial *ukaz* which treated women as a portable commodity. The authorities "moved women there in batches, for example, 150 were sent from Tot'ma, Ust-Sisolska [Vologda province] in 1630."[150]

Sexual relationships between Russian men and native women were commonplace. The Decembrist exile D.I. Zavalishin wrote in 1883 that due to shortages of Russian women, not only peasants but "officials and priests married peasants, even *karimovs* born from Russian and Buriats, or Tunguts"[151] The term *karimov* or *karim* referred to by Zavalishin was defined by Vladimir Dal' in his famous dictionary as "an Irkutsk word" meaning "baptised Buriats, the newly-baptised, *métis* (*metis*)... A cross between the Russian tribe and the Buriat, Tungus, Mongolian" and a cognate of "*Boldyr'*; a child of a marriage between a Russian and Samoyed equating roughly to 'bastard' (*ublyudok*) in relation to being illegitimate (*nezakonnorozhdenny*) rather than sexual immorality."[152] This locally-defined category, with both ethnic and religious elements, was indicative of the diffuse nature of 'Russianness' in the isolated villages of East Siberia.

The figure of the *karimov* was, much like attempts at social and economic acculturation, a result of attitudes towards the Buriats that leant more towards hybridisation than true assimilation. Perhaps the most famous assertion of the fabled assimilatory capacity of the Russian genus came from the esteemed Pan-Slavist historian and ethnographer Nikolai Yakovlevich Danilevsky (1822-1885). In his renowned *Russia and Europe* (1869), which called for the creation of a pan-Slav empire under the auspices of the Russian tsar, Danilevsky wrote of the "assimilating power of the Russian people, which converts the aliens with whom it comes into contact, into the Russian flesh and blood."[153] In

[150] Ibid., p.2.
[151] D. Zavalishin, '*Kolony*, Kak Stupen' v Razvity Chelovechestva (Okonchanie)', *Vostochnoe Obozrenie* (St Petersburg, 30 June 1883), №26, p.9.
[152] Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovii Slovar' zhivogo Velikoruskogo Yazika* (St Petersburg, 1863-66), [viewed 25/08/2014] http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enc2p/254090 and [viewed 25/08/2014] http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/vasmer/37011/Болдыр
[153] Nikolai Danilevsky, *Rossiia i Evropa*, 5th edn (St Petersburg, 1895), p.532, quoted in Tolz, *Inventing the Nation*, p.201.

Irkutsk, some observers were less sure. Taking a scientific approach consistent with his writing for the Siberian Branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, in 1865 K. Chudovskii claimed that the Europeans and *inorodtsy* of the taiga regions had been both culturally and ethnically integrated by the Russians. However, even Chudovskii's forceful endorsement of the Russian capacity for civilising stopped short of proclaiming total assimilation:

> All the non-native populations (Poles, Tatars, etc.), are completely absorbed by the mass of the Russian population and have lost all individuality. The natives themselves try to keep themselves isolated, living their original life, but the Russian influence on them is reflected more and more strongly. Something of their faith, customs, way of life and language has almost become Russian, while the rest (the majority) is gradually moving towards it. Even in the structure of the skull and torso, the indigenous natives have changed, with the interbreeding of the European (Russian) race, as the highest, prevailing over the Asiatic (Mongolian), and often the Buriats' tribal origins can be found only by scrutinising their smallest features, they seem otherwise purely Russian.[154]

A.P. Shchapov was well aware that inter-marriage had always been commonplace in East Siberia and traced his mixed ancestry back to the early years of Russian colonisation. He claimed that "the Russian peasant genus of Shchapov" had come to Irkutsk province in 1693.[155] However, an anonymous obituary published in the *Izvestiia* of the SIRGS in 1876 claimed that whilst his family was undoubtedly "purely local…"[w]hether they all come from single ancestor, a Russian settler who came from Russia, or whether the Shchapovs are the descendants of tribute-payers who were baptised at some point and through baptism absorbed the name, we cannot say."[156] Shchapov's analysis

[154] Chudovskii, p.96.
[155] Shchapov, 'Fizicheskoe Razvitie Verkholenskogo Naseleniya', p. 49.
[156] 'Afanasii Prokop'evich Shchapov (nekrolog)', *Izvestia Sibirskogo otdel Imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obschestvo*, 1876, p.35.

of the resultant populations also cast Buriat genealogy as a kind of splintering. He described a "new, transitional ethnic type" manifested in an alteration of prevailing religious, cultural and social practices:

> Thus Russian peasant clans, among other things, in addition to the generic colonisation of the headwaters of the Lena and the reproduction of the folk population (*narodno-naseleniya*), serve another cultural-ethnological role; they facilitated the birth, propagation and development of the genera of baptised, tribute-paying, sedentary alien (*iasachnoi-kreshchenikh inorodtsev*), godfathering them into the compound of the Russian peasant population.[157]

Although they had been depicted as both helpless and hideous in the context of the *starozhily* village, Shchapov portrayed the Russian-Siberian peasant women of the Kudinsk-Lena area as agents of racial and cultural renewal among the Buriats. In taxonomical language, he claimed that not only had "cross-breeding, refreshed and more or less reinvigorated" the Buriats, but it had also fundamentally altered their previous incapacity for settlement: "the genesis of the sedentary, indigenous *inorodtsy* and native Russian peasants... [is] known to have come about by the mixing in marriage of Buriats with Russian women."[158] Whilst he did not ascribe this power of racial renewal to Buriat women, Shchapov did characterise them as agents of social change. He claimed that the creation of shared farmland and the implementation of co-operative work were due to the fact "that the settled *inorodtsy* women are beginning to well understand the importance of artels."[159] This same focus on women as agents of change was noted in a compilation produced by Ministry of Popular Education in 1869 entitled *A Collection of Documents and Articles on the Education of the Inorodtsy* which advocated that efforts be focused on

[157] Shchapov, 'Fizicheskoe Razvitie Verkholenskogo Naseleniya', p.55.
[158] Shchapov, 'Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaia Obschina', p.196.
[159] Ibid., p.129.

winning over women, "since the tribal language and tribal particularities of *inorodtsy* are preserved and upheld primarily by mothers."[160]

Shchapov was also particularly concerned with the fecundity of the unions between Buriat men and Russian-Siberian women. He obtained anecdotal information on the maximum number of children it was supposedly possible for Buriat and Russian women to have in the different settlements. For example, Shchapov recorded the testimony of "one Buriat women with many children" in Baendeavsk who told him "Among us, women used to have 20 children or more, but their daughters now only give birth to 16, or even 10, 12, or less." [161] He continued that in the same locale, "the Russian peasant women claimed that among them there are also those women who are 'wearing' ('*nosyat*") 22 or even up to 24 'bellies' ('*brikh*') as they put it."[162] This more biological, even zoological, approach is not entirely surprising. Given that Shchapov, like Chudovskii, was writing for Russia's foremost learned society, it makes sense that he would focus on applying the prevailing scientific explanations of racial difference to what he saw in rural Irkutsk province, rather than turning to the more ethereal notions of the artistically inclined. Such interest in the reproductive capacity of Irkutsk's peasant women, especially in mixed-race unions with Buriat males, reflected wider fascination and concern with sexuality on imperial frontiers. Such views would become more common as ideas of Social Darwinism and eugenics gained credence in the later decades of the nineteenth century. As part of this, the role of women as 'mothers of the nation' led to increased state and private scrutiny and interventionism surrounding their ability to have and raise children. A raft of organisations were set up to 'educate' lower class women in 'mother craft', while underlying factors like poverty were often ignored. [163]

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[160] *Sbornik dokumentov i statei po voprosu ob obrazovanii inorodtsev* (St Petersburg, 1869), quoted in Geraci, p.123.
[161] Shchapov, 'Fizicheskoye Razvitiye Verkholenskogo Naseleniya', p.60.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Cooper and Stoler, p.91.

Conclusion

Although they were grouped as *inorodtsy* alongside tens of other native groups, the Buriats of East Siberia were culturally, religiously, socially and economically diversified within their own population. Much of this differentiation was due to the almost three centuries of Russian rule, during which time local and national authorities had sought to 'civilise' the Buriats along supposedly Russian lines which were themselves unfixed. This diversity may also go some way to explaining the inconsistencies in portrayals of the Buriats, as observers sought to extrapolate and summarise their own experience into more universal characterisations.

Late imperial "transformationist culture" diagnosed faults and prescribed solutions that owed as much to the all-pervasive 'peasant question' as they did to ideas of imperial rule.[164] Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper have noted how categorisation and the notion of teleological progress drove a civilising mission “based on the notion of change".[165] Analyses of the social, cultural and economic aspects of Buriat society led to a splintering of the binary positions of 'native' and 'Russian' at a time when similar stress was being placed on that dichotomy by the contest between old and new Siberian settlers. Whilst the overwhelming majority of characterisations of the Buriats still placed them firmly in the *inorodtsy* camp, observers in the vast spaces of Irkutsk province seemed to create new sub-categories of language, economic function, lifestyle and confession to accommodate increasingly fragmented native groupings within their civilising model. However, these complex, hybridised categorisations were often nothing more than additional theoretical hurdles placed between *inorodtsy* and full ‘civility’.[166] This is unsurprising, as the

[164] Aleksandr Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia’s Imperial Experience* (Cambridge, 2011), p.3.
[165] Cooper and Stoler, p.7.
[166] Benita Parry, ‘Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse’, *Oxford Literary Review*, 9 (1987), p.40 [viewed 31/12/2013] http://dx.doi.org/10.3366/olr.1987.002.

complete, successful ‘enlightenment’ of native peoples would have abrogated the moralising, civilising rationale of Great Power imperialism.

5

Anti-Semitism and the Irkutsk cultural class

> The Siberian Jewish question is simply a reflection of the all-Russian Jewish question (*obshcherusskogo evreiskogo voprosa*). It is exacerbated when a storm rages, and then just disappears somewhere, effaced when all-Russian life returns to normal... Such a completely artificial creation as the Jewish question in Siberia is caused only by the reactionary policies of the St Petersburg sphere…[1]

The late imperial period was a transformative one for Russia's Jews, as long-standing legal barriers were falteringly lifted, amended and reinforced. By 1917, significant if uneven improvements had been made.[2] In undertaking its reforms, the Russian government sent fact-finding missions to Austria, Bavaria,

[1] M., "Evreisky Vopros v Sibiri," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №19-20 (1908), p.14.

[2] There is a vast historiography on the experiences of Jews in late imperial Russia. Some key works are Eugene M. Avrutin, *Jews and the Imperial State: Identification Politics in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2010); John Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question, 1855-1881*, Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies 96 (Cambridge, 1995); Henrietta Mondry, *Exemplary Bodies: Constructing the Jew in Russian Culture Since the 1880s*, Borderlines : Russian and East European Jewish Studies (Brighton, Mass., 2010), [viewed 18/12/2012] http://site.ebrary.com/lib/uon/Doc?id=10509039; Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia*, Studies on the History of Society and Culture 45 (Berkeley, 2002), [Viewed: 19/11/2012] http://site.ebrary.com/lib/uon/Doc?id=10054452; Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia*, St. Antony's/Macmillan Series (London, 1986); Gabriella Safran, *Rewriting the Jew: Assimilation Narratives in the Russian Empire*, Contraversions (Stanford, California, 2000), [viewed 03/02/2014] http://site.ebrary.com/lib/uon/Doc?id=10040386; Steven J. Zipperstein, *Imagining Russian Jewry: Memory, History, Identity*, The Samuel & Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies (Seattle, 1999).

Prussia, France, Britain, Belgium and The Netherlands to study how their governments dealt with Jewish emancipation. Emerging human and biological sciences were set against centuries of ethno-religious mythmaking to seek new answers to 'the Jewish Question'. Russian interpretations of these various European models were trialled in the decades after the Great Reforms, meaning that "across Europe in the nineteenth century... the Jews became, and came to be perceived, as the pan-European minority."[3] Henrietta Mondry has noted that as "the majority of Russian scientists were educated in Germany and France, and had read literature published in German, French and English, [they] tended to follow in the footsteps of Western anthropological and biological science."[4] However, the condition of Jewish populations was by no means uniform within states, let alone across the continent. Russian Jews lived under severe social, political and economic restrictions that had drawn them their own legal and physical space in the Pale of Permanent Settlement. In the enduring system of social estates that ran across ethnic and national lines, Russia's Jews were placed, much to their dismay, in the *inorodtsy* estate in 1835.[5] Many Jews felt that it was a grave insult to be grouped with the 'small peoples' of the Russian east, many of which retained nomadic, illiterate cultures. This categorisation is indicative of Gabriella Safran's assertion that "The fluidity of the image of the Jew parallels that of Russian national identity."[6] The convergence of pan-European and Russian elements in framing Russian Jews provides an intriguing case study in the Irkutsk cultural project.

This chapter shows how these transnational and Russian frames of reference were imported and adapted by the Irkutsk cultural class. This led to changes in characterisations of Jews and a significant hardening of attitudes that culminated in the Irkutsk pogrom of 1905. Contemporary analytical categories of physical attributes, economic function, mental facility and socio-cultural activities provide the overall structure. This will show how there were a

[3] Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p.4.
[4] Mondry, *Exemplary Bodies*, p.29.
[5] Safran, *Rewriting the Jew*, p.27.
[6] Ibid., p.19.

number of similarities between the analyses of Jews, peasants and Buriats such as terminological confusion, ambivalence to the point of contradiction and an interventionist culture that sought to promote the 'civilisation' of marginalised groups. Lila Kalmina has described Irkutsk as a frontier bastion of "rough-and-ready toleration" due to the refusal of many among its merchant class to take part in any discriminatory action again their Jewish counterparts in 1905.[7] Whilst this may have been true for the city's wealthy merchants, and violence was certainly a lesser factor in Irkutsk than in European Russia, this study will show that the attitudes of Irkutsk's cultural class were much less tolerant and owed a great deal to evolving, pan-European streams of anti-Semitic thought.

Counting the Jews of Irkutsk province: Race, tribe or religion?

The nineteenth century saw the development of systematic, statistical analysis of both domestic and imperial domains. Governments sought to harness new scientific and sociological disciplines to obtain greater knowledge of, and so control over, their territories. Even so, disproportionate effort was devoted to discerning the exact size of Irkutsk province's Jewish population. The supposed economic and demographic precarity of the empire's eastern regions was a pressing concern for the Irkutsk cultural class, as seen in their willingness to grasp the "golden hand" of the “great resettlement movement” in spite of the injurious consequences for the *starozhily*.[8] In the same vein, it was deemed vital to keep account of any potentially 'unreliable' or minority groups.

Although its shortcomings were many, the 1897 census was often held up as the most reliable source of demographic information for the Russian Empire.[9] It recorded a total of 5.2 million Jews in the Russian Empire, over 90% of whom

[7] Ibid., p.138.
[8] P.N., “Literaturnaya Kritika Pismo 1; Kolonizatsionnaya Skhemi i Russkoe Nedomislie, E.D. Zimmerman,” *Sibir’*, February 12, 1878, №2, p.171.
[9] See David Moon, “Estimating the Peasant Population of Late Imperial Russia from the 1897 Census: A Research Note,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, №1 (January 1, 1996), pp.141-53.

lived in the Pale of Permanent Settlement.[10] Three decades of what Benjamin Nathans has dubbed "selective integration" of Jews deemed “useful” by the government had increased the total number living on licence outside the Pale to 314 000, along with an unknown number of illegals.[11] The majority lived in St Petersburg and Moscow. This made Jews the fifth largest ethnic grouping in the empire, and the largest single non-Slav, non-Christian group.[12] By comparison, in 1900, Austria-Hungary had the world’s second largest Jewish population with 2 000 000; Germany had 550 000, Britain 200 000, and France 115 000.[13]

On 12th June 1860, Alexander II relaxed his brother Nicholas I's blanket ban on Jewish settlement among the *starozhily* in Siberia.[14] At the same time, the Ministry of the Interior instructed provincial police officials to "establish the most stringent surveillance" of Jewish migrants.[15] Writing for the Siberian branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (SIRGS) in 1865, K. Chudovskii counted 849 members of the "Semitic tribe" (507 male, 342 female) in Irkutsk province, with the total rising to around 1 500 with the inclusion of baptised Jews (*Evrei kreshchenie*), and thus 0.25% and 0.5% of the total population respectively.[16] A separate SIRGS report stated that in 1861 there were 270 Jews living Irkutsk city from a municipal total of 37 700.[17] Despite the continued restrictions on settlement, the 1897 census recorded that in the preceding four decades the Jewish population of Siberia had grown to 32 597, of a total Siberian population that had increased to 5.7 million people. In that time, the Jewish population of Irkutsk had grown to 7 111 people, from a

[10] Safran, *Rewriting the Jew*, p.7.
[11] Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p.4.
[12] There were fourteen million Muslims across the empire, but they were not of one single population group.
[13] Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p.66.
[14] Lila Kalmina, “The Possibility of the Impossible: Pogroms in Eastern Siberia,” in John Doyle Klier and Shlomo Lambroza (eds), *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*, (Cambridge, 2004), pp.132-3.
[15] Avrutin, *Jews and the Imperial State*, p.111.
[16] K. Chudovskii, “Istorino-Etnograficheskoi Ocherk Irkutskoi Guberny,” *Zapiskii Sibirskogo Otdel Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obschestvo*, 1865, №8, p.80.
[17] “Tablitsa Naselenia G. Irkutska,” *Izvestia Sibirskogo Otdel Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obschestvo* III, №4 (November 18, 1872), pp.1-2.

provincial total of 514 267. This represented an almost nine-fold increase from Chudovskii's census and made Irkutsk province home to 21.81% of the region's Jews. It also meant that Jews were the third largest grouping in the province after the 'Great' Russians and Buriats. This growth is all the more surprising considering that a large percentage of the provincial Jewish population travelled not as free settlers but as criminal exiles and cantonists. Both of these groups had the legal right of settlement following the end of their respective terms. Lila Kalmina has estimated that of the 7 946 Jews recorded in Irkutsk province in 1898, only 4 197 were there of their own volition.[18] Moreover, the families of exiled Jews usually followed them Siberia. However, even with this demographic increase, in 1897 Jews represented only 1.38% of the provincial population, 2.26% of the legal Jewish population outside the Pale, and 0.14% of the empire's total Jewish population.[19]

Whatever the actual total, it is safe to say that Jews were a small percentage of the overall Irkutsk population. Statistical analysis published by the SIRGS in 1872 reported that "the number of people of the Jewish confession [is stable], contrary to common opinion about their multiplying (*umnozhenii*) in Irkutsk. The male population is almost unchanged; the female population is subject to the usual fluctuations."[20] Regardless of the facts, the perception of a booming Jewish population were ever-present in Irkutsk. An anonymous two-part article printed in *Sibir'* in 1878 called 'Jews as Colonists in Siberia' summed up the local mood:

> in Irkutsk there are 100 Jewish heads of household, and each family consists of five people, from which we obtain a figure of 500 Jews, or 2% of the total population. This assumes that all adult male Jews

[18] Kalmina, "The Possibility of the Impossible," pp.131-2.
[19] N.A Troinitskovo (ed.), *Pervaya Vseobshaya Perepis' Naseleniya Rossiiskoi Imperii, 1897, LXXV. Irkutskaya Guberniya*, LXXV (St Petersburg: Tsentralnogo Statisticheskogo Komiteta Ministerstva Vnutrennikh Del', 1904).
[20] "Statisticheskiia Zametki O Vostochnoy Sibiri (Stat'ia Deystvit Chlena V.I. Vagina. Prodolzhenie)," *Izvestia Sibirskogo Otdel Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obschestvo* III, №4 (November 18, 1872), pp.209-10.

> in Irkutsk are homeowners. Everyone would perhaps agree that in Irkutsk that the number of Jews is no less than that total, or is possibly considerably higher... There is no significant settlement in the province ... where there are no Jews. The recent influx of Jews to Siberia is evident to all. Surprising then, that according to the official figures, there are no Jews in Siberia.[21]

This seems to draw directly on concerns that arose in European Russia during the debate over lifting territorial restrictions on the empire's Jewish population. There were widespread fears of a 'flood' of Jews pouring out of the densely populated Pale of Settlement into the Russian core and beyond. There are also clear signs of the 'Jewish Question' taking on the same mixture of innatist and determinist characteristics which defined the Russian human sciences from the 1880s.

Although Chudovskii had spoken of "the Semitic tribe" in 1865, race was not the key distinguishing factor in his survey. Rather he seemed more concerned with classifying the provincial population by longevity or lifeway, having grouped the Irkutsk Jews alongside the Poles, Tatars, Caucasians and Germans in the category of "newly arrived outsiders, or temporary" (*prishel'tsev poslednikh vremen, ili nepostoyannikh*).[22] This categorisation set the Jews apart from the bulk of the *inorodtsy* estate. However, like the anonymous compiler of the report on the 1872 Irkutsk survey, Chudovskii claimed that his final arbiter of belonging was confession (*ispovedania*). He noted under one of his tables that it "shows only the unbaptised Jews (*Evrei nekreshchenie*). The baptised were counted among the number of the Russians".[23] Even though Orthodoxy had ebbed as the defining element of belonging in the late imperial

[21] "Evrei Kak Kolonisti v Sibiri [pt 1]," *Sibir'*, May 28, 1878, №17, p.2.
[22] This was opposed to the "native, or permanent residents" (*korennikh ili postoyannikh zhitelei*)- Russian Slavs, Mongols and Yakuts. Ibid., p.79.
[23] This term "unbaptised Jews" hints at the inevitability of such a conversion, a common Christian belief at the time. The Biblical basis for this expectation is found in Romans 11:25-26 (New International Version), "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved... "

period, Russian society remained imbued with strong religious elements. In this context, Chudovskii's differentiation between baptised and unbaptised Jews seems to come down on the side of a cultural identification, with religious conversion being enough to pass into the estate designation of the Russian peasant (*krest'yan*). However, that he felt compelled to differentiate ethnic-Russian peasants from the baptised Jews shows the limits of each path of Jewish integration. This was common across the empire. For example, on the internal passports required to travel to Siberia in the first place, customs officials stamped the "ethnoracial signifier 'of Jewish origin' in the convert's passport to help distinguish baptised Jews from their coreligionists." [24] Gabriella Safran has stated that the increasing legal distinctions made between those born into Orthodoxy and those labelled as "persons of Jewish descent" was evidence of a trend towards seeing genuine Russian and Orthodox identity as an inherited status.[25] Much like their fellow Irkutsk *inorodtsy*, the Buriats, Jewish acculturation produced not wholly 'Russian' converts, but a sizeable group of people with a partial, hybridised status.

As the nineteenth century progressed, many Irkutsk publicists sought to reinforce ideas of the Jews as perennial historical, racial, religious, social and economic outsiders. This mirrored the attitudes expressed by many west of the Urals at a time of growing unease over Jewish integration. Following the pan-European trend towards biological conceptions of difference, "the depiction of Jewish characters in Russian literary and cultural productions underwent a significant change, as scientists came to conceptualise the Jew not only as an archetypal exotic and religious or class Other (as in both Romanticism and Realism), but as a biological Other whose acts, deeds and thoughts were determined by biological and racial differences."[26] The writer

[24] Avrutin, *Jews and the Imperial State*, p.94.
[25] Safran, *Rewriting the Jew*, p.11.
[26] Mondry, *Exemplary Bodies*, p.18; Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca, 1992), pp.130-1.

of 'The Jews as Colonists in Siberia' understood the growth of Irkutsk's Jewish population in similar terms, noting that

> Although the Jews have much difficulty in accessing Siberia, the Jewish population of Siberia, at least in the big cities, is growing very quickly, rapidly even. In West Siberia, overcrowding forces the Jew to live in misery ... sometimes the quality of his hygienic and dietary life is no better than the animal whose flesh they so despise. In spite of this, the Jews migrate there and multiply like said despised animals. Fecundity is a tribal feature of the Jewish people. As everyone knows, with better material conditions, the ability to reproduce naturally increases. The reproductive abilities of the Jews are much higher than those of the Russian in the same conditions, and there will come a time in Siberia when the Jewish population within it, as in other places, reaches its maximum.[27]

Such analyses show how traditional anti-Semitic imagery was refitted to a pseudo-scientific zeitgeist by members of the Irkutsk cultural class. The author's interest in the relationship between fertility and environment also recalls A.P. Shchapov's ethnological investigations among the Buriats and Russian-Siberian peasants of the Kudinsk-Lena region a few years prior.[28] Like Shchapov, they refuted environmental determinism as the driver of fertility and instead claimed that the Russian birth rate lagged behind due to well-worn notions of Jewish fecundity. They also chose, with unerring crassness, to mock the impoverished Jews of West Siberia by making a certainly intentionally offensive comparison to the "animal whose meat they so despise."[29] Images of

[27] "Evrei Kak Kolonisti v Sibiri [pt 2]," *Sibir'*, June 4, 1878, №18, p.1.
[28] See, for example A.P. Shchapov, "Fizicheskoe i Etnologo-Genealogicheskoe Razvitie Kudinskogo i Verkholenskogo Naseleniya [p.1]," *Izvestia Sibirskogo Otdel Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obschestvo* VI, №5 and 6 (1875), pp.189-200; A.P. Shchapov, "*Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaya Obschina* v Kudinsko-Lenskom Krae," *Izvestia Sibirskogo Otdel Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obschestvo* VI, no. 3 (July 1875), pp.97-131; A.P. Shchapov, "Fizicheskoe Razvitie Verkholenskogo Naseleniya," *Izvestia Sibirskogo Otdel Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obschestvo* VII, №.2-3 (June 1876), pp.37-68.
[29] "Evrei Kak Kolonisti v Sibiri [pt 2]," p.1.

Siberian Jews often paired racial, almost zoological, descriptions with Biblical allusions. The author quoted an article by the Jewish writer Grigory Bogrov (1825-1885), a native of Poltava, in which he advocated the abolition of the Pale of Settlement. Bogrov refuted contemporary characterisations of the Jews, stating "If the Jews really are a plague from God, then why should this plague not hang over the whole of Russia and not just the non-Russians? If you see the Jews as greedy, voracious locusts, why then round up those locusts in one area?"[30] This image was a subversion of the Biblical story of the ten plagues that freed the Jews from slavery, as narrated in the Book of Exodus, with the Russian Jews taking the place of the locusts that ravaged the powerful Egyptian empire. The combination of new ideas of fundamental racial difference and religious imagery was a potent one in a society still strongly imbued with Orthodoxy. It was also easily ported from the debate on Jewish rights in the Pale and reframed within contemporary debates in Irkutsk surrounding the legalisation of peasant settlement to Siberia. Quoting Bogrov also afforded the author the opportunity to rather dishonestly state that "even their defenders tend to look upon as greedy, gourmand locusts".[31]

Although the Russian Empire was often portrayed as treating its Jews especially badly, this trend towards a potent, modernised anti-Semitism was European in scope. In Britain, for example, even as the status of families like the Disraelis and Rothschilds spoke of greater tolerance, the widening influence of Darwinian social and anthropological corruptions created a cultural atmosphere whereby "suddenly, dramatically, and most alarmingly for Anglo-Jewry, the 'expressibility' of prejudice greatly increased in the 1870s" and "stereotypes and caricatures of... Jews as anti-Christian or as traitors appeared... in mainstream journals such as the *Fortnightly Review*, *Contemporary Review*, *Nineteenth Century*, *Punch*, *Spectator*, *Church Times*,

[30] G. Bogrov, "Zhit ili ni zhit evreyam povsemestno v Rossii?", *Slovo*, №2, 1878, quoted in "Evrei Kak Kolonisti v Sibiri [pt 1]," p.1..
[31] "Evrei Kak Kolonisti v Sibiri [pt 2]," p.2.

and *Nonconformist* and from the pens of eminent Victorians."[32] In the recently unified German Reich, the late nineteenth century saw the founding of the German Social Anti-Semitic Peoples Party and a dedicated bloc of fifteen anti-Semitic deputies in the Reichstag.[33] Most famously of all, the Dreyfus Affair laid bare the extent of institutionalised anti-Semitism among sections of the French army and ruling elite.

Jewish physiognomy

Heightened fertility was not the only 'tribal feature' ascribed to the Jews. Ideas of supposedly innate Jewish physical features were a ubiquitous aspect of anti-Semitic rhetoric across Europe. Despite their long-term residence in what became the Pale of Settlement, the degree of physical separation between Jewish and Christian communities, and centuries of religious propaganda, still covered conceptions of the Jews in the Russian Empire in myth and superstition. As Robert P. Geraci has noted in relation to the conquest of Russia's Asian empire, in such inter-cultural encounters more immediate features such as hairstyle, clothing and physiognomy quickly gained symbolic importance as "elements of ethnic or religious identity" that acted as a kind of shorthand that later expanded to entrench deeper differences.[34] One of the most consistent physical characteristics in depictions of 'Other' groups in such instances is uniformity. In late nineteenth century ethnography, notions of individuality gave way to the idea of a taxonomical ethnic 'type'. Much like regionalist conceptions of a unique *Sibiriak*, the vagaries of human society were flattened into sweeping discussions of 'the Jew' (*evrei*) or 'the Yid' (*zhid*) which were framed as ideologically neutral, scientific analyses. This

[32] Anthony S. Wohl, "'Dizzi-Ben-Dizzi': Disraeli as Alien," *Journal of British Studies* 34, №3 (July 1, 1995): p.377.
[33] Christian Davis, *Colonialism, Antisemitism, and Germans of Jewish Descent in Imperial Germany* (Michigan, 2012), p.29.
[34] Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2001), pp.36-7.

appropriation of scientific language was rhetorically useful in allowing for tidy generalisations about diverse communities. Depending on the preference of the author, physical or mental divergence from this supposed norm could be put down to racial mixing, environmental factors, or simply ignored.

One of the most common assertions surrounding Jewish physiognomy was physical weakness. According to Gary Rosenshield, leading Russian writers like Dostoevsky and Turgenev used Gogol's template of the "ridiculous" Jewish servant Yankel from the short story *Taras Bulba* (1835) as a template for depictions of Jews in their work.[35] For example, in *Notes from the House of the Dead* (1862), which was based on his time in exile in Omsk between 1849 and 1854, Dostoevsky depicted the Jewish prisoner Isay Fomich Bumshtein as a similarly pathetic character whose appearance had a dehumanising, zoological aspect meant as comic relief:

> ...even now I can't recall him without laughing. Every time I looked at him I would recall Gogol's little Jew Yankel from *Taras Bulba* who, after he had undressed, so that he could repair for the night with his Jewess to some cupboard, looked terribly like a chicken. Isay Fomich, our little Jew (*zhidok*), was the spitting image of a plucked chicken.[36]

One example of the transfer of Jewish physical stereotypes to Irkutsk province which shows the influence of Dostoevsky's work is the story of the ruthless kulak Zakhar Egorovich, published in the regionalist literary supplement *Sibirskii Sbornik* in 1899. Like *Notes from the House of the Dead*, it focused on criminal exiles. The author, writing under the pen-name 'Dumin', described how Zakhar surveyed a motley crowd of prisoners that provided a selection of racial stereotypes from around the empire: "There were people from the Kama and the Volga, as they say, of all ages from the decrepit old man (*dryakhlogo*

[35] Gary Rosenshield, *The Ridiculous Jew the Exploitation and Transformation of a Stereotype in Gogol, Turgenev, and Dostoevsky* (Stanford, CA, 2008), p.13, [viewed 03/02/2014] http://site.ebrary.com/lib/uon/Doc?id=10313988.
[36] Ibid.

starika) to the burgeoning youth (*rastsvetaiuishchego yunoshi*)... You could see the figures of the sullen Circassian, the sluggish Little Russian, the brisk, lisping little Jew, Armenians, Bashkirs, Tatars."[37] The 'Jewish lisp' was a stock trope of fictional and dramatic depictions of Jews that emerged in the early nineteenth century and was popularised by Charles Dickens.[38] The emergence of Russian realism in the 1870s did not bring more positive characterisations of Jews. Russian realist depictions of Jews were nothing more than a new literary style grafted over stock characters who were used only as a foil for the virtuous peasant or the brave soldier. [39] Henrietta Mondry has described late nineteenth century science as forming a racial definition of "anomalous" Jewish physiognomy that was characterised by common physical features and diseases. [40] In his 1888 novella *The Steppe*, Chekhov poured centuries of physically symbolic stereotypes into the characters of Moisei Moiseevich and Solomon Moiseevich, brothers with reedy voices, wild mannerisms, hooked noses, diseased bodies and plentiful allusions to circumcised genitalia. [41] Mondry cites the 1880 edition of The Russian Ethnographic Dictionary which described the Jews as susceptible to both hereditary diseases and to contracting others such as consumption, scrofula and haemorrhoids due to their ruinous lifestyles.[42] Such descriptions were common across European literature. For example, the character of Fagan in Dickens' celebrated novel *Oliver Twist* (1838) "stands forth lurid and malignant as the figure of Satan in medieval pageantry" depicted in the original illustrations as having red hair, a large, hooked nose and a skeletal frame swathed in a long cloak and broad hat.[43]

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[37] Dumin, "Bogatei (Rasskaz Iz Derevenskogo Byta)," *Sibirskii Sbornik*, №. 1 (1899), p.42.
[38] Deborah Heller, 'The Outcast as Villain and Victim: Jews in Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and *Our Mutual Friend*, in Derek Cohen and Deborah Heller, *Jewish Presences in English Literature* (Montreal, 1990), p.43.
[39] Safran, *Rewriting the Jew*, p.16; Galya Diment, *Goncharov's Oblomov: A Critical Companion* (Evanston, 1998), pp.77-8.
[40] Mondry, *Exemplary Bodies Constructing the Jew in Russian Culture, since the 1880s*, p.47.
[41] Ibid., p.43.
[42] Ibid., p.47.
[43] Edgar Rosenberg, *From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction* (Stanford, 1960), p.126.

The Jewish economy

In Irkutsk province, the 'Jewish Question' was viewed in the context of the all-pervasive 'resettlement question' which sought to Russify the vast expanses of Siberia through the further development of peasant agriculture. Although they were deemed to be highly adaptable in other contexts, the supposed racial degeneracy and physical weakness of Jewish bodies left little conceptual space for them in Russian Siberia, either in the mould of the European Russian peasant as a hardworking "coloniser *par excellence*" (*kolonist po preimushchestvu*) or the honest, rugged *Sibiriak* frontiersman.[44] Moreover, the wide distribution of traditional, negative conceptions of Jews meant that their presence in the villages of Siberia was seen as a threat to the future of the Russian nation by those regionalists who held the *Sibiriakii* to be the repository of an unspoilt Russian soul. Jews had been banned from owning land in Russia in the late eighteenth century, and this was reinforced and expanded by the typically durable 'Temporary Laws' of 3rd May 1885.[45] However, there had been sporadic and unsuccessful attempts by the increasingly interventionist Russian state to 'peasantise' Jews in the mid nineteenth century, such as in Novorossiia after its seizure from the Ottomans, and in Novosibirsk. These efforts were much less concerted that the long-term, forced settlement policies imposed on Buriat communities, but they do show some consistency in approach. In any event, most Jews who were granted permission to resettle went to urban areas. The government did little to discourage this as there were widespread concerns about allowing contact between Jews and Russian peasants.[46] In the western provinces, Jews were labelled as "*Lutfmenshen*" (literally, 'air people'), in that they seemed to 'conjure' their wealth as shopkeepers, artisans, brewers and traders rather than raising it from the

[44] Geraci, *Window on the East*, p.x.
[45] Legally, Jews were expelled from the countryside not due to prejudice, but because as members of an urban estate, they had no right to live anywhere else: Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I*, Russian Research Center Studies 94 (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), p.84.
[46] Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p.37.

earth.[47] The consolidation of these stereotypes in Russian popular culture was facilitated by the growth of a mass-circulation popular press in the late nineteenth century that often contained both visually and textually derogatory depictions of Jews.[48]

As mentioned above, the Jewish population of Irkutsk province was relatively small, and the majority were exiles, cantonists and their immediate families. However, just as Irkutsk's cultural class appropriated frames of reference created in the sprawling industrial cities west of the Urals to guide their perceptions of the emerging Siberian proletariat, they did the same in relation to the Irkutsk Jews. The author of 'Jews as Colonists in Siberia' offered a thorough examination of the economic abilities of Jews that was steeped in traditional imagery of workshy exploiters of the peasantry:

> Ask any Jew about agriculture, and he will tell you that he is not capable of practicing farming, that it is none of his business, that others can engage in farming and he will find himself a more suitable job that requires less physical exertion and promises bigger profits. Siberia is a vast, sparsely populated land; it needs people, but not Jews... The Jewish farmer, the Jewish settler is unheard of, the eighth wonder of the world... What on earth can these people, with their favourite jobs of 'taverning and usury', bring to Siberia? Furthermore, [the Jew] cannot be a direct producer, only a consumer of the people's welfare. The resettlement of Jews, pouring this mass ... into Siberia, a sparsely-populated country, would only move the centre of gravity of the Jews, not change them.[49]

Surprisingly, in spite of such entrenched opposition, not to mention legal restrictions, Irkutsk province was in fact home to Jewish traders who combined

[47] Ibid., p.100.
[48] Mondry, *Exemplary Bodies*, p.30.
[49] "Evrei Kak Kolonisti v Sibiri [pt 2]," p.2.

enterprise with agriculture. In his travels around the remote districts of his native Kudinsk-Lena region, A.P. Shchapov claimed to have met several such people. In wholly positive fashion, he described encountering

> in Anginsk suburb, a man called Marco Forshtein, with two desyatins [of land], a family of five males, three females and two children, engaged in animal husbandry and arable farming. He has five horses, eleven head of cattle, two sheep, eight pigs, and sows three desyatins of winter grain and two desyatins of spring grain - and at the same time he has a tavern.[50]

In addition, Shchapov claimed to have met "the Irkutsk trader Brenny" and two other "trading Jews" who "have ten desyatins of arable land in one place, and at the same time sell goods to almost 20 000 people in the same area."[51] However, as respected as he was, Shchapov's views remained in the minority, perhaps because they were espoused in a relatively inconsequential digression from an in-depth study of the peasants and Buriats of the Upper Lena. His writings are also notable for their frequent use of the word 'Yid' (*zhid*) in both his prose and in reported speech by Russian peasants, showing that it was part of *Sibiriak* nomenclature by the 1870s. This was a recent development, as the author of 'Jews as Colonists in Siberia' reported that "The word 'Yid' (*zhid*), the vernacular name of Jews in the Western provinces, and indeed throughout much of Russia, was infrequent in Siberia while they were few. However, in recent years, with the influx of Jews, it has currency across the full citizenry."[52]

[50] Shchapov, "*Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaya Obschina*," p.114.
[51] Ibid.
[52] "Evrei Kak Kolonisti v Sibiri [pt 2]," *Sibir'*, June 4, 1878, №18, p.2. The word "Yid" is originally of High-German origin.

The 'parasitic' Jew

Shchapov extensively and uncritically quoted the peasants of the Kudinsk-Lena region as railing against the "Yiddish bloodsuckers" and the "godless, mercenary Yiddish trade" in alcohol.[53] These potent statements combined religious allusions with allegations of avarice and cruelty; taverns and alcohol traders became symbols of the supposedly corrosive influence of Jews on Siberian communal solidarity, and also provided an easy scapegoat for social strife. Since most Irkutsk Jews had little chance of obtaining farmland and often even less experience of farming, they worked mostly in the trades of the *Luftmenshen* of the Pale. The figure of the Jewish innkeeper became axiomatic in descriptions of village life in Irkutsk province.[54] For example, a rural sketch published in *Sibir'* in 1878 depicted with no great subtlety "the groaning, moaning tavern of the Ozernov bartender, the Yid Haim", upon which "like flies around honey, the *Sibiriakii* descended" immediately after church to get uproariously drunk.[55] The supposed ubiquity of this figure was accepted as fact. The author of 'Jews as Colonists in Siberia' glibly asserted that "a Jewish tavern or a Jew running some other business" was an ever-present feature of every significant town or village in the province.[56] Shchapov went so far as to advocate the confiscation of Jewish-run taverns and placing them under communal control.[57] In this old-fashioned image of corrupted virtue, so prevalent in 1870s realist literature, the desire to prevent Jews from settling in rural areas was framed as a means of 'protecting' the peasant population from exploitation. Evidently, the proprietor of *Sibir'*, the *Irkutyan* historian and IRGS member Vsevolod Ivanovich Vagin, was happy for his newspaper to act as a coordinating and transmitting device for this kind of anti-Semitic material:

[53] Shchapov, "*Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaya Obschina*," p.121.
[54] Ibid., p.114.
[55] "Derevenskaya Tseni s Zadatskami (Iz 'ocherkov Zhizni Prichskovikh Rabochik')," *Sibir'*, May 7, 1878, №14, p.5.
[56] "Evrei Kak Kolonisti v Sibiri [pt 1]," p.1.
[57] Shchapov, "*Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaya Obschina*," p.113.

> The editor of *Sibir'* has repeatedly received correspondence with complaints about the Jews, many of which are known to readers. From all over, complaints are starting to pour in about the exploitation of 'honest people'. Activities inherent to Jews of the Western provinces have been shown to have manifested themselves in full force among the Siberian Jews. Though of a different shade, they are all the same of the exploitative, parasitic Yid character. This shows that already the Jewish element in Siberia had put down deep roots.[58]

Alongside this image of 'the Jew as innkeeper' was the idea of the Jew as petty trader, middleman and usurer. These were well-established Jewish stereotypes, harking back to Jesus' numerous encounters with moneylenders and tax-collectors in the New Testament. Edgar Rosenberg has described Christian narratives as portraying Judas Iscariot as "the original businessman with the contract in his pocket."[59] Shakespeare's Shylock, Chekhov's 'The Slough', and the aforementioned Yankel, Isay Fomitch and Fagin provided notable examples among many. Although the character of Alyona Ivanova in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* was not actually a Jew, she was drawn with familiar stereotypes of Jewishness. "She is as rich as a Jew", a parasitic "louse", and her diseased, decaying body and birdlike features recall classic Jewish stereotypes:

> She was a diminutive, withered up old woman of sixty, with sharp malignant eyes and a sharp little nose. Her colourless, somewhat grizzled hair was thickly smeared with oil, and she wore no kerchief over it. Round her thin, long neck, which looked like a hen's leg, was knotted some sort of flannel rag, and, in spite of the heat,

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[58] "Evrei Kak Kolonisti v Sibiri [pt 2]," p.2.

[59] Rosenberg, *From Shylock to Svengali*, p.21. Leonid Livak has described "the importance of references to 'the jews' in creeds may vary by writer, but the *actor* called 'the jews' is central to the Christian myth... 'killing the Lord Jesus [...] and opposing all men (I Thessalonians, 2:14-16); Leonid Livak, *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination: A Case of Russian Literature* (Stanford, 2010), p.27.

> there hung flapping on her shoulders a mangy, furry cape, yellow with age. The old woman coughed and groaned at every instant.[60]

Less vividly rendered than by the likes of Dostoevsky or Shakespeare, the image of the grasping Jew was still clearly visible in the Irkutsk press. It was believed that "Their preferred business is trade, money, etc., the special Jewish pursuits... All the activities of the Jewish in such places [as West Siberia] are focused mainly on trade, usury and brokerage, through which the Jew exploits the population among whom he comes."[61] The 1897 guidebook to Irkutsk province devoted only two glib sentences to the local Jewish population: "Among them are rich merchants and artisans, but the majority are hucksters (*melkie torgashi*). They are not engaged in agriculture."[62] They were deemed unworthy of further discussion. The author of 'Jews as Colonists in Siberia' even espoused the viewpoint that the lure of easy riches in Siberia was enough to subvert the nascent Zionist movement, in a manner especially galling to those who invested their hopes in the Russification of Siberia as the salvation of the Slavic race and the Russian people:

> A separate country, a single Jewish population is inconceivable, even to the Jews themselves. In a conversation about the Jews buying Palestine, a Jewish acquaintance told me, 'No. Palestine is worthless to us these days; what is there for us to do there? No trade with anyone, after the war impoverished the Turks, the Sultan himself, perhaps, does something, all of which the English pick up. We would either die of starvation or eat each other... Siberia is another matter; it may yet come to be called the 'Promised Land' It is not for nothing that an exiled Jew says that if he had known that being in Siberia would be so good, he would have tried to commit a criminal offence earlier.[63]

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[60] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, 1998), p.5.
[61] "Evrei Kak Kolonisti v Sibiri [pt 1]," p.2.
[62] *Irkutskaya Guberniya*, Ocherki Sibiri Dlya Narodnogo Chteniya 1 (Irkutsk, 1897), p.32.
[63] "Evrei Kak Kolonisti v Sibiri [pt 2]," p.1.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Russia's Jews took advantage of the modernisation of the economy, as well as the easing of restrictions placed on higher education and professional occupations, to diversify their economic activities away from trade. Driven by the growing Jewish community in the capital, by the end of the nineteenth century "Petersburg Jewry gave rise in Russia to a new image of the Jew as modern, cosmopolitan, and strikingly successful in urban professions ... that were emerging in the wake of the Great Reforms".[64] In Irkutsk too, the Jews were quickly established in the popular imagination as a "cosmopolitan tribe", taking up a wide range of urban occupations: [65]

> He (the Jew) is a merchant, barber, doctor,
> Barkeep, the broker and the pharmacist,
> Musician and drummer,
> Moneylender (usurer), sometimes the bath attendant.[66]

Rather than praise for this economic diversity, there was criticism aimed at categorising such trades as superfluous, parasitic, morally inferior to agricultural work or craftwork, and not in keeping with the *Sibiriak* ethos: "Let's suppose that sometimes people need the doctor and bathhouse attendant, but not all of us *Sibiriakii* are doctored and steamed… [T]he Jewish-artisan and Jewish-craftsman are an exception, and are even scarcer in places where the Jewish population is generally sparse."[67] Moreover, as with most elements of the Jewish mythos, "this new profile did not supplant but instead coexisted uneasily with the enduring figure of the Russian Jew as backward, fanatically separatist, and frequently impoverished. In this respect, the effects of selective Jewish integration in Russia were remarkably similar to those of full-scale emancipation in Europe." [68] For example, in 1911 the Jewish Italian

[64] Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, pp.341-357.
[65] Chudovskii, "Istorino-Etnograficheskoi Ocherk Irkutskoi Guberny," 95; "Evrei Kak Kolonisti v Sibiri [pt 1]," p.2.
[66] "Evrei Kak Kolonisti v Sibiri [pt 1]," p.1.
[67] Ibid., p.2.
[68] Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p.125.

criminologist Cesare Lombroso, whose ideas were widely debated in Russia in relation to the question of the racial degeneration of urban workers, described his Russian co-religionists as "principally usurers, counterfeiters and smugglers, carrying this last pursuit to the extent of smuggling women and exporting them to Turkey."[69]

As part of the new Social Darwinist-influenced science of the late nineteenth century, the study of anthropological criminology added another angle of investigation for those seeking to stigmatise social, racial and cultural outsiders. It seems also that these ideas were more readily accepted in relation to the Jews than the Buriats or Russians. Lombroso's Positivist-based ideas stressed causal links between race and criminality, and styled criminology as a branch of degeneration theory. He believed that "the influence of race upon criminality becomes plainly evident when we study the Jews and the gypsies." [70] Lombroso's studies were pan-European in scope, with highly dubious statistical analyses of criminality across Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia. He was widely influential in Russian anti-Semitic circles. His most famous advocate in Russia was Ivan Alekseevich Sikorsky (1842-1919), Professor of Psychology at Kiev University. Sikorsky expounded the link between the "physical features and criminal psychological make-up of various races and nations."[71] In particular, he singled out the Jews for their supposed "moral simplicity" (*nravstvennyi simplitisizm*) whereby "The essence of ... shades and variations of emotion is manifested by the substitution of multiple feelings by only one emotion: either the strongest one, or the most elementary."[72] In this argument, the purportedly animalistic nature of the Jews

[69] Cesare Lombroso, *Crime, Its Causes and Remedies*, trans. Henry P. Horton (Boston, 1911), p.39.
[70] Ibid., pp.38-9.
[71] Mondry, *Exemplary Bodies*, p.31.
[72] I. A. Sikorskii. Dannye iz antropologii. Russkaia rasovaia teoriia do 1917 goda. Ed. V. B. Avdeev. Moscow: Feri-V. 2004. pp.229- 266, quoted in Ibid., p.39.See also 'Ivan Sikorsky and his 'Imperial Situation', and '"Jewish Phsyiognomy', the 'Jewish Question,' and Russian Race Science between Inclusion and Exclusion', in Marina Mogilner, *Homo Imperii: A History of Physical Anthropology in Russia* (Lincoln, NE, 2013).

again appears, this time manifested through psychological and physical symbiosis.

It is likely that this argument would have found particular resonance among the Irkutsk cultural class, given their province's continued use as a place of criminal exile, their fears of urban disorder and the significant section of the local Jewish population who were either criminal (including political) exiles or their descendants. The image of the Jews as amoral parasites intent on extracting as much money as possible from the hardworking *Sibiriakii* for minimal effort was certainly in keeping with these ideas. This obviously led to a situation whereby Jews sent to Siberia were tainted with the stigma of criminality and tied to the unpopular criminal exile policies of the state. The absurdity of forbidding entrepreneurial, educated Jews from resettling in Siberia for fear of them corrupting the population, all the while sending Jewish criminals there, was summed up in a 1908 article signed only 'M.', which is perhaps unsurprising given its forthright criticism of the government:

> Siberia is among the places considered closed to Jews. But Siberia is the land of exile, and therefore even though it is closed for all Jews who had no business in the dock, her doors are open to those mired in the filth of serious crime... This creates a situation whereby if you are honest and do not defame the court officials, or if you have not managed to be deemed untrustworthy by the government, you have no place in Siberia because you are a Jew, from whose pernicious influence the government protects the flock of the Orthodox Church. But if you are a villain whose hands are stained with the blood of a murdered neighbour, with a conscience burdened by killing and looting, or you are politically suspect in the opinion of the police, then there is no reason to be afraid of your pernicious influence on the Orthodox flock. That is the logic of the Russian state's anti-Semitism and intolerance. True,

it does not chime with universal logic, but as if that ever bothered anyone... [73]

For all of that, it is not surprising therefore that there seems to have been little room for Jews, native or otherwise, in constructions of the *Sibiriakii*. The 'Russian Jew' had only emerged as a concept in the 1860s with the loosening of restrictions on Jews as part of the Great Reforms.[74] However, this label also hints at the inability of the Jews to fully 'cross over' into another estate, just as Chudovskii's flagging up of baptised Jews in the peasant estate did back in the mid-1860s. Jewish estate designations tended to be described with a string of nouns rather than an adjectival form, such as 'Jew merchant' (*evrei-kupets*), or 'merchant for the Jews' (*kupets iz evreev*), rather than simply as a 'Jewish merchant' (*evreisky kupets*).[75] Whatever economic or social role they held, it seems that Jewishness was an indomitable factor. This is reminiscent of the compound identifiers that were placed on Irkutsk's Buriat population as a result of the state's Russifying policies, such as 'newly-baptised Buriat' (*novokreshchennii buriat*) or '"multi-lingual" settled aliens' (*'raznoyazichnikh' osedlikh inorodtsev*).[76] This exclusion, and the practical implications of it, left Irkutsk's Jewish population in a vulnerable position.

Anti-Jewish violence in Irkutsk province

Besides illustrating the readiness by which ideas and received knowledge were transported between metropole and colony, as well as transnationally, the carrying of these anti-Semitic tropes to Irkutsk had more disturbing consequences for the province's Jewish population. The ready appropriation of overtly negative western European and European Russian frames of

[73] M., "*Evreisky* Vopros v Sibiri," pp.11-12.
[74] Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p.3.
[75] Ibid., p.74.
[76] Shchapov, "*Selskaya Osedlo-Inorodcheskaya i Russko-Krestyanskaya Obschina*," p.112.M. Bogdanov, "Zemleotvodniya Operatsii I Buryati Irkutskoi Guberny," *Sibirskie Voprosui*, №35-6 (1908), p.30.

reference by the Irkutsk cultural class laid the groundwork for the emergence of Russian patterns of anti-Semitic violence in the province. Having largely avoided previous outbursts, Irkutsk's Jews were not spared the pogroms inflicted on their co-religionists west of the Urals in 1905. East Siberia has been described by Lila Kalmina as "the least likely area for anti-Jewish pogroms ... [as] virtually none of the factors advanced to explain pogroms in the Pale of Settlement [such as population density, economic exploitation or a tradition of rivalry and suspicion] were present."[77] However, whilst in 1897 Jews only accounted for 1.38% of the provincial population, their numbers had risen disproportionately in relation to overall population growth, from 849 in 1861 to 7 111.[78] As mentioned previously, the important factor was the widespread perception that the Irkutsk Jewish population was growing rapidly.

The assassination of Alexander II in 1881 led to a two-year upward cycle of anti-Semitic violence that spread to hundreds of communities in European Russia. Whilst such pogroms were nothing new, "1881 inaugurated a new pattern of anti-Jewish violence in which national political events acted as decisive catalysts and rioting occurred not just in isolated settings but across large regions for months or years on end."[79] The vast majority of these were in urban areas. The official line was that these attacks were a manifestation of popular anger at Jewish exploiters. Hans Rogger and others have challenged this, indicting the tsarist government for attempting to funnel widespread popular unrest towards vulnerable minorities.[80] However, Benjamin Nathans has claimed that these violent outbreaks relied on "deeply embedded rather than consciously manipulated antipathies in certain sectors of the population."[81] Violence simmered under the surface in the 1890s then burst forth again in 1903 in Kishinev, with increasingly frequent and severe

[77] Kalmina, “The Possibility of the Impossible,” p.131.
[78] Chudovskii, “Istorino-Etnograficheskoi Ocherk Irkutskoi Guberny”; “Tablitsa Naselenia G. Irkutska,” p.80.
[79] Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p.186.
[80] See "The Jewish Policy of Late Tsarism: A Reappraisal", Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia* in; Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p.187.
[81] Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p.187.

outbreaks in the tumultuous years of revolution and war. The Russian pogroms represented the most extreme manifestation of rising anti-Semitism, anti-modernism and jingoistic nationalism across Europe. Their spread was also concomitant with the growth of the mass media, as cheap *lubokii* and the sensationalist "kopek press" whipped up underlying tensions.[82]

As discussed in Chapter 3, Irkutsk was significantly affected by revolutionary violence in 1905. Lila Kalmina has stated that anti-Jewish violence in Irkutsk in 1905 was not a 'genuine' pogrom due to its being part of the wider political and social upheaval. Her reason for this is the lack of workers and Cossacks among the participants, who were mostly "petty shopkeepers, peasants, and craftsmen, usually not very successful ones," which she takes as proof that "an element of business-related jealousy and a desire to eliminate rivals played a role."[83] However, economic rivalries were a recurring element in pogroms. For example, Robert Weinberg has shown that participants in the Odessa pogrom of 1871 explained that they wished to strike at not just the wealthy Jewish factory owners and bankers of the city, but also the growing number of Jewish cab drivers who were affecting their trade.[84] Moreover, as stated above, there was much resentment among the inhabitants of Irkutsk province at the supposedly exploitative practices of Jewish tavern owners. Kalmina's claim that the events were only retrospectively characterised as a pogrom is similarly dubious. Although certainly couched within staunchly ideological frames of reference, the narrative of events given by the Irkutsk Social Democrats immediately identified the violence towards local Jews as being racially motivated. A report in their Irkutsk newspaper *Sotsial'-Demokraticheskii Listok* from August 1905 stated that "With all the pogroms, with all the persecution of the Jews, our organisation ... moved decisively to protect them from the police and the [Black Hundreds] hooligans. Russian conscious workers (*Russkie*

[82] Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton, 1985), especially Chapter 4.
[83] Kalmina, "The Possibility of the Impossible," p.137.
[84] Robert Weinberg, *The Revolution of 1905 in Odessa: Blood on the Steps* (Bloomington, 1993), p.18.

soznatel'nie rabochie) were arm-in-arm everywhere with the Jewish workers (*rabochimi evreiskimi*)."[85] A report in *Sibirskie Voprosui* by the Znamensk native Ivan Innokentevich Serebrennikov also characterised the violence as a pogrom. Serebrennikov was later a Minister in the reactionary All-Russian Provisional Government formed by Admiral A.V. Kolchak, so had little truck with the Bolsheviks. Nevertheless, he concurred that

> On the morning of 17th October ... the Black Hundreds were led, according to the rumours, by the bailiff Shcheglov... Around 5 o'clock in the evening they had their first confrontation with some of the strikers, who were returning from the rally; there were shots fired and some were wounded and injured... The proclamation of the pogrom had already spread around the city; the plan was to destroy the homes of the rich Jews.[86]

Whilst it is undeniable that the mob also attacked non-Jewish targets like government buildings, shops and socialists, it is clear that the anti-Semitic element of the violence was based on characterisations of Irkutsk's Jews as akin to the 'exploiters' of the Pale, regardless of their economic status as merchants or workers. The city's Jewish population also perceived the violence in this way, as seen by the formation of the Irkutsk Jewish Defence Committee (*Irkutskii komitet evreiskoi oboroni*) on 15th July.[87] On 18th October, two members of the Committee, the Jewish students I. And Ya. Wiener were murdered by the Black Hundreds.[88] Serebrennikov claimed that this brutal double murder galvanised the city's population, and the next day "for the first time, the Black Hundreds were strongly resisted and had to abandon their intention of the imminent institution of a general anti-Jewish pogrom (*vseobshchei evreisky pogrom*)."[89] Much as all-Russian socialist organisations

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[85] "Korrespondentsii," *Sotsial'-Demokraticheskii Listok*, August 1905, №2, p.6.
[86] I. Serebrennikov, "'Krasnie' Dni v Irkutske (Posvyaschaetsya M.E. Amosovoi) [pt 1]," *Sibirskie Voprosui* 3, №20 (1907), pp.15-16.
[87] "Korrespondentsii," p.5.
[88] Serebrennikov, "'Krasnie' Dni - 1," pp.16-17.
[89] Ibid.

had emerged in Irkutsk, so too had right-wing associations like the Black Hundreds. Whilst they did not speak for all *Irkutyani*, it is implausible to suggest that characterisations of the Jews in Irkutsk province were not shaped at least partly by the same anti-Semitic frames of reference that motivated pogroms in European Russia. Even those members of the Irkutsk cultural class with more benign opinions of Siberian Jews were convinced that they had been the targets of a pogrom. For example, to return to the article which started this chapter, in 1908 the aforementioned 'M.' wrote for *Sibirskie Voprosui* that "the Siberian Jewish question is almost a present day phenomenon which has, moreover, been artificially created and carefully nurtured. The 'Jewish question' in Siberia is pure nonsense, because there are no real grounds for it; it just does not fit into the Siberian social-domestic framework!" [90] M. admitted, however, that such nuances had been lost, as

> its cachet in contemporary Siberia cannot be doubted, because all of its manifestations, from the 'expulsion in 24 hours', to 'no right of residence' for Jews, right up to the three day pogrom with murders and brazen robbery of property are already known here, so much so that the absurdity that is the Siberian Jewish question is no longer unthinkable.[91]

Conclusion

Having studied Jewish emancipation in other European states, the tsarist Government was well aware that it often gave rise to increased anti-Semitism, as seen in France and Germany. In the mid-nineteenth century, the prominent Jewish leader Emanuel Levin expressed the hope that following the lifting of settlement restrictions, the relatively scant development of print media and communications in the empire would mean that Jews moving beyond the Pale

[90] M., "*Evreisky* Vopros v Sibiri," p.9.
[91] Ibid.

would "be dealing with a fresh people not yet possessed of a well-formed public opinion, people also, not having tolerated Jews in their midst until now, who have had neither the time or the occasion to develop feelings of jealousy or hostility toward them."[92] This was mere fantasy. The Jews were well known across the empire; even if a particular settlement had never had contact with them, the religious teachings of the Orthodox Church, in keeping with many branches of Christianity, preached the role of the Jews in the betrayal and execution of Jesus. As Benjamin Nathans has stated, "whatever their function as ideal types, in practice, integration and emancipation do not release their subjects onto an even social terrain."[93] This was certainly the case in Irkutsk province, as there is clear evidence that its cultural class began to characterise the local Jewish population using the increasingly pathological frames of reference being developed in European Russia and beyond. Much like the Buriats, Jews attempting to acculturate or assimilate were described in terms of hybridity rather than discrete passage between social estates.[94]

There were certainly underlying methodological commonalities in the characterisations of Russian peasants, workers, Buriats and Jews. All were subjected to the lens of ideologically-driven, rapidly developing human sciences. These often produced dichotic images that encompassed a mixture of innate and environmental factors, zoologically categorised and flattened to stress uniformity. However, whilst the Irkutsk cultural class often analysed the resultant depictions in terms of assimilation and the pursuit of a 'civilising mission', it appears that attitudes towards the province's Jewish population hardened significantly during this period. This reflected an all-Russian trend described by Dominic Lieven whereby "the 'Jewish threat' became a lightning rod for tensions caused by rapid economic modernisation, domestic political instability and external military vulnerability."[95] Jews were made scapegoats

[92] Quoted in Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, p.54.
[93] Ibid., p.71.
[94] For more on the differences between these two processes, see Safran, *Rewriting the Jew*, p.8.
[95] D.C.B. Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (London, 2000), p.221.

for the social and economic problems caused by the unreliability of Siberian agriculture and the upheaval of the resettlement movement. In 1905, with central authority temporarily weakened, many *Irkutyani*, like many European Russians and others across the continent had and would continue to do, used to veil of civil disorder to seek 'revenge' on a demographic minority they blamed for many of their woes.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored depictions of established Russian-Siberian peasants, settlers from European Russia, non-agricultural workers, indigenous Buriats and Jews that were created by the Irkutsk cultural class (*kul'turnogo klassa*) during the late imperial period. It centred on categories of analysis that were utilised at the time in scientific and literary treatments of lower class peoples, such as social mores, cultural activity, economics, physiognomy and sexuality. It also studied how these images informed the development of a "transformationist culture" of government in the rural, urban and colonial environments of Irkutsk province.[1] Using theories of imperial networks and cultural projects borrowed from cultural geography, these debates were situated within the wider context of transnational, inter-imperial frames of reference. The portrayals of populations groups in both domestic and colonial settings that were situated within these frameworks rested on common core signs and assumptions found across other pre-war European empires, which made both the frameworks and the images highly portable. This anthropocentric comparative is used to "bring the [Russian] empire back in", both in recognising the imperial frames of reference within which this culture played out, and also as a means of furthering historiographical analyses that argue against Russian exceptionalism.

The source material for this study was the cultural output of the Irkutsk cultural class. As such, it was important to understand both them and their environment. By 1917, Irkutsk had developed from its seventeenth century origins as a fortified outpost for collecting fur tribute into one of the preeminent social, cultural, political and administrative centres of Russian

[1] Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge, 2011), p.3.

Siberia. During the late imperial period, the profits of gold mining and trade with China greatly enriched the merchants, traders and prospectors of Irkutsk. Alongside the improvement of physical networks of communication that linked the city to the metropole and other imperial centres, this led to a general embourgeoisement of tastes and an attempt to create a polite society modelled on the great European capitals like St Petersburg, Paris and London. Wealthy patrons funded the construction of grand stone buildings for cultural institutions including theatres, art galleries and learned societies. This fostered the growth of Irkutsk's cultural class, the heterodox composition of which reflected the cultural empowerment of the *raznochintsy* across the empire. Irkutsk also became a centre of Siberian regionalism and many of its leading and lesser lights made significant contributions to the development of this movement. Print journalism thrived in the city. The editors of Irkutsk's 'thick' journals and newspapers regarded themselves as cultural evangelists seeking to spread enlightenment within the province, foster a strong *Irkutyan* identity and enhance the connection between Irkutsk society, the Russian metropole and other European cities and colonies. In spite of this, the city's inhabitants faced a constant struggle to positively define their space to a growing number of visitors. Many outsiders perceived not the 'Paris of Siberia' they had read about, but rather a louche facsimile of European society that struggled to mask a coarse, dangerous frontier mining town on the shores of Lake Baikal.

The heart of this study concerns the largest population group in Irkutsk province, the Russian peasantry. They were often conceptualised as being made up of two separate but miscible elements; established 'Old Siberians' descended from runaway serfs and Cossacks, and 'New Siberian' migrants who came from European Russia following the gradual relaxation of settlement restrictions in the late nineteenth century. They were known by a plethora of terms, such as 'newcomers' (*novosely*), settlers (*pereselentsi*) and colonists (*kolonisti*), which reflected the theoretical ambiguity regarding both the land they were going to and their projected role within it. This was partly because the 'resettlement question' was an offshoot of the 'peasant question', a

defining issue for the late tsarist state which touched on a wide range of social, economic and political issues as well as the fractious debates surrounding Russian identity.

Siberian regionalist thought placed the *starozhily* at the centre of their conceptions of a unique Siberian ethnic 'type'. This was a romanticised and somewhat contradictory mixture of materialist and determinist elements, which was often used to bolster local arguments for self-determination. Over the late imperial period, the romanticised image of the *starozhily* was challenged by arguments with both Russian and international parameters. Canonical "peasant icons" like the kulak and “grey peasant” were ported to and modified within the Irkutsk cultural project as interpretive tools.[2] In both St Petersburg and Irkutsk province, the movement of settlers to Siberia was also widely discussed in a comparative, international context. Political theories like liberalism and nationalism were mixed with evolving branches of enquiry like anthropology, statistics and Social Darwinism to produce a taxonomical evaluation of the capabilities of Irkutsk's competing peasants. This fostered the growth of an interventionist, transformationist culture that encompassed traditional Russian paternalism and contemporary scientific doctrines. Proponents of these ideologies sought to undertake a fundamental reorganisation of the lives of the *starozhily*; traditional *volost'* communes were broken up, their agricultural methods were criticised and they were rebuked for their supposedly faulty grasp of Orthodoxy. Administrators sought to standardise and optimise the socio-economic conditions of the province's agricultural land and inhabitants. This "internal colonisation" was comparable in its scope and aims to the civilising mission foisted upon white settlers and native peoples in other parts of the world.[3] However, there were certainly differences in intensity and methodology, and this study does not aim to project some vague, all-encompassing notion of ‘imperial’ experience. The

[2] Cathy A. Frierson, *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late Nineteenth Century Russia* (New York, 1993).
[3] Etkind, *Internal Colonisation*.

Irkutsk cultural class was deeply involved in this debate. Whilst some had been critical of the *starozhily* before the legalisation of resettlement, greater acquaintance with the deprivation they faced, as well as the continued policy of dispossession to accommodate impoverished *novosely*, led them to push for greater rights for native peasants. As such, the image of the heroic Siberian pioneer did not fade away. Some maintained it intact, whilst other, more scientifically minded observers reimagined the *Sibiriak* as a pragmatic frontier agriculturalist.

The penetration of capitalism into Siberia, so lamented by many observers of the region's peasantry, facilitated the development of non-agricultural industry in Irkutsk province. In particular, the discovery of gold, allied with the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, fostered the creation of an industrial workforce of roughly a quarter of a million people. This engendered a degree of urbanisation and social change that ran parallel to the resettlement question. Although on a much smaller scale, there were growing concerns in Irkutsk about how to deal with the social problems created by the emergence of this new workforce. Local and visiting observers appropriated images and frames of reference formulated in relation to the industrial heartlands of Russia and Europe in a search for interpretative methodologies and solutions. Unsurprisingly given the analytical tools used, the proposed solutions to these problems - hygiene guardianships, educational societies and public works - were modelled on the municipal policies of large European cities. However, conceptions of society fundamentally split along class lines met strong opposition from regionalist figures arguing for the existence of a distinct *Sibiriak* genus. These regionalist ideas were confronted with increasingly strong Marxist voices by the turn of the century, a contest that would continue into the coming years of civil war.

Much like the *starozhily*, the Irkutsk Buriats were affected by the arrival of new settlers, as it was from their settlements that the majority of land was taken. The long history of Russian settlement and intermarriage with the Irkutsk

Buriats meant that there was more common ground between the two than was often the case in zones of intercultural contact. However, the history of the Russian-Buriat encounter was scarred by conquest, forced conversion and dispossession. Moreover, the Buriats were still legally categorised as *inorodtsy*, an entirely separate, self-contained estate. By the start of the late imperial period, Irkutsk's Buriat population was highly variegated, with lifestyles ranging from settled, Russophone, Orthodox arable farmers to nomadic, pastoral shamanists. As *inorodtsy*, they were the focus of the Russian variation of the nineteenth century imperial civilising mission which blended traditional Orthodox messianism with contemporary human sciences. Whilst this took place within more explicitly imperialist frames of reference, there were many similarities to ideologies of improvement directed towards the peasantry; adherence to 'pure' Orthodoxy, moral probity, language, culture, domestic lives, sexuality and means of subsistence were all targeted. The civility of the Buriats was most often measured directly against the Russian-Siberian peasantry. However, there was no legal or even conceptual consensus on the criteria for 'becoming Russian'. Rather, local observers tended to produce images not of Buriats transformed into 'Russians', but of natives who had adopted some aspect of Russianness while remaining fixed in their original estate. These new subcategories of linguistic, economic, lifestyle, confessional and even genetic appropriation fractured the binary opposites of Russian and *inorodtsy* but did not allow passage between the two.

Finally, characterisations of the Irkutsk Jews provide an interesting case study in the portability of imperial and domestic frames of reference for conceptualising low-status groups. The Jews were "the pan-European minority" in the nineteenth century, and the 'Jewish question' was an area of active international cooperation in the human sciences.[4] Influential images and frames of reference surrounding European Jews were readily transferred

[4] Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale the Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia*, Studies on the History of Society and Culture 45 (Berkeley, 2002), pp.3-4, [Viewed: 19/11/2012] http://site.ebrary.com/lib/uon/Doc?id=10054452.

to Irkutsk province. As religion diminished in importance as the arbiter of Russian identity, traditional anti-Semitic arguments were bolstered by contemporary racialist discourses of inferiority and separateness. That being said, outside observers expressed a similar level of interest in the reproductive capacity of Jews as seen with peasants and natives. Moreover, Irkutsk's Jews were similarly judged on their economic activity and morality. Legal restrictions, longstanding anti-Semitic stereotypes of fundamental Jewish unsuitability to labour-intensive subsistence farming and fears surrounding their 'corruptive' influence on naive peasants were also carried over. With little choice, Irkutsk's Jews took up trades with which they were traditionally associated such as inn-keeping. As such, Jews were excluded from both the romantic myth of the *Sibiriak* as a heroic pioneer and new conceptions that sought to Russify Siberia through the spread of rational peasant agriculture. The efficiency with which these negative images were transported to Irkutsk province manifested itself in the pogroms of 1905.

Structuring this project as a case study of the relatively small Irkutsk cultural class has several advantages. First, the frequent overlapping of scholarly and public functionary roles in areas with small educated populations meant that their works could have a greater impact on local administrative decisions.[5] As such, this project can in some way contribute to the study of governmental practice by agencies of the tsarist state such as the Resettlement Administration and Land Survey Unit. More importantly, the use of a case study contributes to what Daniel Brower has dubbed a "microhistorical" method in studying the Russian Empire.[6] This approach allows a more refined exploration of cultural projects and networks, which Brower refers to as the "links that ran among colonies and regions, sometimes touching the centre,

[5] Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2001), p.159.
[6] Daniel Brower, "Along the Borderlands of the Empire (A Conclusion)", in Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, and Alexander Martin (eds), *Orientalism and Empire in Russia*, (Bloomington, 2006), p.349.

sometimes operating largely on their own, and occupying an important place - sometimes symbolic, and other times practical, in empire building."[7] As such, it wholeheartedly endorses the argument put forward by Nicholas Breyfogle, Abby Schrader and Willard Sunderland that sees the multiplicity of Russian colonialism as its unifying factor:

> When viewed in its broadest scope, the history of Russian colonisation is a history of diversity *within* continuity. The intertwined processes of movement and settlement had myriad regional, local, even individual inflections, yet they were also coherent… [I]ts practices and patterns formed part of a broader international story of migration, state building, the projection of power over non-metropolitan peoples, and the transformation and exploitation of 'empty' or 'underutilised' territories. The methods, terminologies, and mentalities of settlement in Russian Eurasia carried their own inflections, shaped by the particulars of the countries, history and geography, which is what one would expect, but they did not result in the creation of a uniquely 'Russian' approach to colonisation.[8]

In a comparative context, this study has added to the growing literature which seeks to re-orient the Russian Empire in the mainstream of New Imperialism. Russian specialists such as Jane Burbank, Alexei Miller, Alexander Etkind, Susan McCaffray and Michael Melancon have sought to situate the Russian Empire much more securely within transnational, European comparatives in recent years.[9] It also contributes to the argument put forward by Jane Burbank and

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader and Willard Sunderland, 'Russian Colonisations: An Introduction' in Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader and Willard Sunderland (eds), *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies, 38 (Abingdon, 2007), p. 8.

[9] Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, N.J., 2010); *Imperial Rule*, Pasts Incorporated (Budapest, 2004); Etkind, *Internal Colonization*; *Russia in the European Context, 1789-1914: A Member of the Family* (New York, 2005); Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, and Alexander Martin (eds), *Orientalism and Empire in Russia* (Bloomington, 2006).

Frederick Cooper of the neglected importance of continental empires in debates surrounding the nature of nineteenth and twentieth century Great Power imperialism.[10] The Russian Empire was no less 'imperial' for having abandoned its trifling possessions in California and Hawaii and selling Alaska to the United States.[11] The creation of a more rounded historiography of Russia's colonial empire further diminishes the methodological segregation of late imperial Russia from its Great Power contemporaries.

The unique contribution of this project lies is in borrowing the interpretive tools of spatial history and human and cultural geography, namely imperial networks and cultural projects - and adapting them to a resolutely anthropocentric study of Russian colonialism. In combination with analyses of conceptions of key population groups in late imperial Irkutsk, this study has been able to stress the portability of frames of reference used to characterise imperial minorities, peasants and workers, at least in one corner the late Russian Empire. The analysis of industrial workers in a colonial setting, often ignored or subsumed within wider discussions of labour relations and the development of Russian socialism, adds another unusual element.

This study has been necessarily limited in what it set out to achieve and there is a good deal more that could be done. The primary target for an expanded version would be to increase the source base in two ways. First, exploring more of the material produced by the Irkutsk cultural class would enable use of both the more obscure and short-lived newspapers and journals that were produced there, and also personal papers and correspondence. Second, a closer adherence to postcolonial historiography and source materials such as letters and resettlement narratives produced either by or with direct contributions from peasants, workers and *inorodtsy* could provide a more

[10] Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, p.6.
[11] See Ilya Vinkovetsky, *Russian America: An Overseas Colony of a Continental Empire, 1804-1867* (Oxford, 2011).

rounded picture of how characterisations of Irkutsk province and its population were produced, since "contact between peasant and non-peasant society ... helped to shape a popular culture of resettlement" in local areas.[12] This would also provide some insight into lower-class opinions on Siberian regionalism, which is traditionally portrayed as having lacked any support among the general population. There have already been some moves in that direction, notably from Ilia Gerasimov, Jan Kusber and Alexander Semyonov.[13]

The second area of expansion is linked to the first and was inspired by a short quote in Geoffrey Jukes' *The First World War: The Eastern Front, 1914-1918*. Jukes stated that "in 1917-18 the Siberian regiments were the first to leave the front, on the grounds that 'the Germans won't be coming to Siberia.'" [14] Extending the chronology of this study forward through the First World War and beyond into the early years of Soviet rule would provide a wealth of new material. Although broadly liberal and reformist, the Siberian regionalism that was a main focal point of this study served as a unifying factor for people with disparate political viewpoints. The doctrine attained its greatest importance in the three years following the October Revolution. Regionalism "provided a political discourse within which to ground opposition to the Soviet state and constitute a Siberian government."[15] To that end, two separate provisional governments were declared, one in Vladivostok and another in Omsk which absorbed the former in short order. There was even a Siberian Regional Duma founded in January 1918 that had strong regionalist and Socialist Revolutionary elements. Headed by the esteemed regionalist explorer,

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[12] Willard Sunderland, "Peasant Pioneering: Russian Peasant Settlers Describe Colonization and the Eastern Frontier, 1880s-1910s," *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 4 (July 1, 2001): 911; See also Julian Go, "The 'New' Sociology of Empire and Colonialism," *Sociology Compass* 3, no. 5 (September 1, 2009), pp.775-88, [viewed: 22/09/2013] doi:10.1111/j.1751-9020.2009.00232.x.

[13] Ilia Gerasimov, Jan Kusber, and Alexander Semyonov (eds), *Russian History and Culture, Volume 1 : Empire Speaks Out : Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire* (Boston (Massachusetts), 2009), [viewed 26/09/2012] http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10439122.

[14] Geoffrey Jukes, *The First World War: The Eastern Front, 1914-1918* (Wellingborough, 2002), p.90.

[15] Scott Baldwin Smith, *Captives of Revolution: The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Bolshevik Dictatorship, 1918-1923* (Pittsburgh, 2011), p.25.

ethnographer and naturalist Grigory Nikolaevich Potanin (1835-1920), it lacked popular support, and was itself subsumed into Admiral Kolchak's All-Russian Provisional Government in November 1918. Having touched upon the tensions between regionalism and Marxism in Chapter 3, it would be interesting to see how regionalist thought was altered by the establishment of the Bolshevik government in Moscow. Moreover, it would be interesting to see how local Bolsheviks conceptualised the lives and characters of the *starozhily*, *novosely* and *inorodtsy* inhabitants of Irkutsk province, and how they proposed to incorporate these complex, interwoven societies into the emerging, class-based Communist order. The combination of these elements would produce a more detailed and authoritative picture of how frames of reference created in imperial, colonial and domestic contexts were subject to appropriation, adaptation and redeployment outside of their original milieu.

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